

Claremont School of Theology

**The Merced Compassion Cultivation Project**

A Practical Research Project Submitted to the Faculty

in Candidacy for the Degree of

Doctor of Ministry

by

George Edd-Bennett

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To Sonja, Kaela, Bradley, and Emily

a loving family, the nurturing mother of all my passions and purpose,

the greatest gift in my life

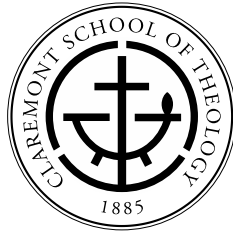
"Do not be dismayed by the brokenness of the world. All things break. And all things can be mended. Not with time, as they say, but with intention. So go. Love intentionally, extravagantly, unconditionally. The broken world waits in darkness for the light that is you."

L. R. Knost

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This professional project completed by

**REV. GEORGE EDD-BENNETT**

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**Faculty Committee**

Rev. Dr. Jack Jackson

Rev. Dr. Karen Dalton

**Dean of the Faculty**

Rev. Dr. Sheryl Kujawa-Holbrook

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## **ABSTRACT**

### **The Merced Compassion Cultivation Project**

by

Rev. George Edd-Bennett

This project seeks to explore how the Compassion Practice, developed by Dr. Frank Rogers, in conjunction with strategic personal story sharing, may be used with lay members of multi-cultural religious communities in Merced, California to assuage fears and create pathways for compassion in an effort to better integrated cultural diversity in the area.

The problem that this project seeks to address is the researcher's experience of broken community relationships that are made more prominent in the face of changing population demographics and were profoundly highlighted by the communities' response to a stabbing incident that took place on the campus of the University of California, Merced on November 4, 2015. The incident demonstrated that isolated factions in the community can be provoked into rushing to judgement of one another rather than seeking to engage, know better, and work toward the benefit of one another. These circumstances make clear that the community needs to explore dynamic pathways toward intentionally building mutual compassion between the dominant Anglo culture in the community and the various minoritized ethnic groups.

To test the hypothesis, that the Compassion Practice coupled with strategic story sharing can be used to cultivate compassion between members of the community that vary in socioeconomic status, age, race, and religious expression, a process of five 80 minute sessions was created and a tool for measuring the effectiveness of this process was developed. The

process would be to spend 20 minutes learning about compassion, 30 minutes engaging in Compassion Practice meditation, 10 minutes reflecting, and 20 minutes sharing about individual faith contexts each week for five weeks. The tool is based upon a 2013 study by Hooria Jazaieri. Jazaieri headed a team of ten researchers at Stanford University to establish quantitative results regarding the ability to cultivate compassion through a simple meditation called Mindfulness Meditation. These researchers used the premise that fear of compassion blocks compassion cultivation. Therefore, if a tool to measure a Compassion Fear Index (CFI) existed, it could be used to quantify the fear of compassion before and after any specific practice. Any change in the CFI would indicate a change in the likelihood of cultivating compassion among those measured.

The study itself saw eleven participants with wide diversity in age, race, socioeconomic status, and religious expression complete the process and apply the developed measurement tool. These participants came together for the five planned sessions, did the weekly homework, completed the CFI measuring tool before and after the study, and openly shared their stories of faith and life experiences. Individual results ranged from no significant impact to dramatic change in participant perceived fear related to compassion. Overall results showed a 17 percent drop in the group CFI after the sessions were complete. The study defines movement in the various participants and in group CFI results to explore what fears changed and quantify the impact of the study upon its participants.

The evidence provided by the study shows highly positive results that may add to the larger conversation about the role of meditation in compassion cultivation. The MCCP itself is a small sample study which cannot be conclusive in its findings. At the same time, the results of this study contribute to the significance of the conclusions that quantitative researchers are finding about the relationship of meditation and compassion cultivation.

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# Introduction

## Making a Relevant Contribution

I arrive in a community by episcopal appointment in the United Methodist tradition. Often, to those awaiting appointment, knowledge of the needs and complex dynamics of a community are a complete mystery. After prayerful consideration, the bishop and cabinet match the gifts of any given pastor with the direction, goals, and aspirations of the faith community where a new appointed pastoral leader is required. After a short introduction, both the pastor and the lay leaders of the church commit to trusting in God as well as in the choice of the bishop and cabinet (area leaders called district superintendents) who matched these leaders and bound them together in the mission of the denomination—“To make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.”<sup>1</sup>

After the mystical process of being appointed, appointed pastors immerse ourselves in the community to learn how the spirits of the individuals long to join in experiences of sacred moments of connection. So often the spiritual hunger and thirst in a community is best revealed in the places of brokenness that present themselves. We see the spiritual longing amid the physical and non-physical barriers. We deal with physical barriers by going around, over, under, or through them. We deal with non-physical barriers by connection, communication, and cooperation. Barriers create division. Division leads to isolation. Isolation engenders ignorance. Ignorance becomes an incubator for fear. Our fears are nurtured as media outlets broadcast, amplify, and reinforce our fears to the detriment of our communities. It becomes clear how segments of the community are isolated by train tracks, language, socioeconomic status, and ethnicity. We feel the spiritual needs when the patchwork of cultures mix awkwardly in a cloud

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<sup>1</sup> United Methodist Church (U.S.), *The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church*, (Nashville, Tenn: The United Methodist Publishing House, 2016), 93.

of confusion about the norms of personal contact, the behavior of children, and the definition of acceptable public presence.

The longing for sacred moments shows up vividly when the sound of fearful rhetoric takes the lead in conversations about community wellbeing. The hunger and thirst of a community's spirit is perhaps best revealed when observing the forces of dominance and subjugation that frame the conversations between strangers, grant the privilege of voice in the local papers, and determine the mood of every public meeting. I observed the spiritual hunger of the community of Merced, California in just this way.

Isolation between minoritized ethnic communities is clearly a problem in Merced. It may be attributable to the recent surges and patterns of population growth among underrepresented ethnic groups. The establishment of a local university has resulted in more than 7300 students with exceptionally high ethnic diversity being added to the community. "UC Merced leads the UC system in the percentage of students from underrepresented ethnic groups, low-income families, and families whose parents did not attend college."<sup>2</sup> (These students are more than 53 percent Hispanic and more than 20 percent Asian/Pacific Islander. Only 10 percent of these students identify as white which means that 17 percent of the student body identifies in the variety of other ethnic categories.)<sup>3</sup> The University of California, Merced is small but still represents a 10 percent population boom in the city with an ethnic blend that changes the dynamics of the community.

Even without considering the impact of the university, the ethnic trends in the population are likely to cause relational strain and ethnic isolation. According to the U.S. Census, the Merced County population is changing in ways that dramatically diminish the

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2. "UC Merced Fast-Facts," Educational Institution, UC Merced, accessed January 18, 2018, <https://www.ucmerced.edu/fast-facts>.

3. "UC Merced Fast-Facts."

relative strength of the population whose culture dominates the norms of the community.

Between 2010 and 2016 the population of Merced County has only increased by 2600 people.<sup>4</sup> Since students are typically temporary residents, it is likely they their population is not among these numbers. The ethnic communities that are most dominant in Merced are Mexican and Hmong immigrants. These populations between 2010 and 2016 increased by 18,400 and 840 respectively while those identified as white only declined by 4700. Over the same time period, the population who identified as white only declined from a 33.1 percent minority to a 29.3 percent minority.<sup>5</sup> It is my observation that population trends like these make the community feel out of balance and awkward when the influences of the respective populations do not shift in kind.

My understanding of a community out of balance is based on how the cultural influences within the community represent the ethnic make-up of that community. The members of the community that identify as white only hold all but two elected offices. Anglo community celebrations like Christmas, New Years, Mother's and Father's day are all publicly displayed (i.e. hearing the lyrics "dreaming of a white Christmas" broadcast in a mall full of brown faces). Home ownership, property ownership, and businesses are observably the domain of the ethnic group that would identify as white only.

When a community suffers from a malady of imbalance, relationships are strained, conversation is difficult, and trust erodes. Herzig and Chasin give us a sense of the distress that can occur in a community that is out of balance in the way described above. "When divisiveness occurs within a community (a town, a workplace, a place of worship, etc.). Whether

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4. United States Census Bureau, "American Fact Finder," ACS Demographic and Housing Estimates, U.S. Census, accessed January 18, 2018, <https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?src=CF>.

5. United States Census Bureau.

the conflict is expressed in heated arguments, cold silence, or a combination of both, many people experience a sense of loss. It may be a loss of authenticity, as when false camaraderie covers up feelings of distrust and estrangement. Sometimes it is a loss of energy and commitment resulting in apathy or the departure of some members.”<sup>6</sup> These authors are describing exactly what I observe in the isolated and trust resistant ethnic blend of this new appointment.

I experience the longing for spiritual connection as the human quest to bridge the barriers of isolation. Even in difficult and imbalanced situations, the longing for connection and mutual understanding simmers beneath the surface of community tension. Herzig and Chasin also believe that difficult conversations long to be had. They continue, “If debates about a controversial issue are especially rancorous, some people may participate in dialogue because they feel alienated by the slogans and tactics of leaders on both sides—even if they are much more supportive of one side than the other. In such situations, people may want to talk about their views in a way that feels authentic, informed, textured, and constructive. They may also wish to transcend the stereotyping that has been promoted by both sides and gain a deeper understanding of people who think differently.”<sup>7</sup> In essence, people long to be heard and people long to be connected.

It is in responding to these longings for sacred moments of communion that I hope to address the Merced Compassion Cultivation Project (MCCP). In Merced, I have recognized the depth and breadth of ignorance the isolated communities hold about one another in the absence of a forum for mutual sharing. The spiritual family is described by L. R. Knost as “Connection,

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6. Maggie Herzig and Laura Chasin, “Fostering Dialogue Across Divides,” Essential Partners, 2017, accessed February 13, 2018, <https://whatisessential.org/fostering-dialogue-across-divides-nuts-and-bolts-guide-public-conversations-project>.

7. Maggie Herzig and Laura Chasin, *Fostering Dialogue*.



Communication, and Cooperation. These three elements, when interwoven with threads of understanding, respect, and love, are what combine to create the beautiful tapestry of a peaceful, happy home.”<sup>8</sup> In my view, these elements would contribute to a happy community as well.

After noting the value of creating pathways for more open communication, I have recognized the depth of ignorance that isolated communities hold about one another in the absence of space for mutual sharing. With a deep respect for the spiritual practices and religious lives that are represented so diversely in the community, I sense the vastness of misunderstanding harbored in individuals and groups that have not yet intentionally sought to know one another’s faith story. When compassion is defined as, “simply being moved in our depths by another’s experience and responding in ways that intend either to ease the suffering or promote the flourishing within that person,”<sup>9</sup> I recognize that access to pathways that may lead to cultivating compassion may be among these longings. A significant problem in our communities is that there are many alternative paths—paths that provoke fear for the members of our communities and erode the relationships that might develop and foster the growth of compassion. It will be important work for faith leaders to counter this problem with pathways to cultivating compassion, thereby building hope and strength into the communities we are serving.

### **Stating the Question**

This project seeks to explore how the Compassion Practice, developed by Dr. Frank Rogers, may be used with lay members of multi-cultural religious communities in Merced, California to assuage fears and create pathways for compassion along the path to integrated cultural diversity in the area.

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8.L. R. Knost, *Jesus, the Gentle Parent: Gentle Christian Parenting* (U.S.A.: Little Hearts Books LLC., 2014).

9. Frank Rogers, *Practicing Compassion* (Nashville, Tenn: Upper Room, 2015), 23.

In essence, the question that I am attempting to answer is the following: can compassion be cultivated by using Compassion Practice teachings and strategic communication in a multi-cultural group?

# **1: Community Context**

## **Emerging Communities in Merced California**

There have been several factors that lead the emergence of strong ethnic communities in Merced both within the community and within the church. The stories of community members illustrate a rapid increase in the Merced communities' diversity that was described in the introduction has far outpaced the communities' efforts to cultivate pathways for embracing this diversity. Ka and Blong Vang recall the Hmong migration relaying that in the 1980s the United States Government chose to make Merced a relocation place for Laotian, Hmong people that were relocating to the U.S. due to political persecution after helping the U.S. in the Vietnam War.<sup>10</sup> In 2006 UC Merced opened to welcome a population of students that were primarily pioneers for education in their home families.<sup>11</sup> This student population is less than 11 percent Euro-American and holds a wide variety of religious perspectives.<sup>12</sup> The community of Merced has become home to migrants from Latin American countries, as have many places in California. I also observe that Sikh immigrants call Merced home as do members of a Pakistan-based Islamic faction called Ahmadiyya Muslims.

My responsibilities in pastoring the United Methodist Church of Merced also shed light on the growing diversity of the community. We are currently sharing our building as the place of worship for the United Methodist Church (a predominantly Euro-American congregation), a Hmong language ministry of United Methodists, the Ahmadiyya Muslim fellowship, and the Etz Chaim Reformed Jewish Community. Rooted in a place of worship that is home to much of the diversity in our town, we offer a unique vantage point for a project that could engage people of

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<sup>10</sup> Ka and Blong Vang, members of the United Methodist Church of Merced, in a conversation with the author August 18<sup>th</sup>, 2013.

<sup>11</sup> "UC Merced Fast-Facts."

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

great diversity in a contemplative platform for the purpose of reducing fears and cultivating avenues for compassion.

Location and industry are factors as well in the stability of the community. In Merced, we are two-hours south of Sacramento and one-hour north of Fresno on Highway 99. The main industry of Merced is now education.<sup>13</sup> The high school district has eleven campuses. The community is home to a junior college that has focused on trades training since the 1960s. In 2006, the University of California, Merced opened. Ralph Stevenson, a retired United States Airforce Captain, recalls the community when he arrived, “the community grew initially as a result of Castle Air Force Base. The base has been decommissioned, but many Air Force personnel that originated from throughout the county have retired in Merced.” The next leading industry is agriculture.<sup>14</sup> Arlette Flores, a local community organizer, teaches that land use, water rights, migrant worker access to health and human services, and immigration policy are extremely important to Merced. Merced is a place where young adults and families struggle to find meaningful employment. I have observed that the industries of Merced are founded in education and access to property ownership continuously reinforces a growing economic disparity between the rich and the poor. Ms. Flores also notes that poverty has created many social problems such as heroin addiction, homelessness, and insufficient health care coverage. Added to the current political divisions in our country, many of these factors are creating isolated communities, feelings of fear, and insecurity.

### **A Crisis of Compassion**

Often the wounds of any community will be revealed in the times of crisis. When these moments strike, we have the opportunity to act in ways that can either help or hinder the health

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<sup>13</sup> United States Census Bureau, “American Fact Finder.”

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

of our citizens, neighborhoods, businesses, and schools. On November 4, 2015, Merced, California faced a challenge that would reveal the community's broken connections in an incident that started as a tragedy and became a crisis of compassion.

The Cable News Network (CNN) and other news platforms immediately fed the fears of the dominant minority Anglo community leaders as they characterized a local crisis as “lone-wolf terrorism” and “ISIS inspired.” This network leads the story with, “A student at the University of California, Merced, who stabbed four people on campus in November before police killed him, attacked after viewing terrorist propaganda, the FBI said.”<sup>15</sup> These characterizations of the first semester freshman, Faisal Mohammad, are consistent with the words frequently associated with the tragic incident which took place early in the morning on a small campus in Central California. Joseph Serna et al. of the L.A. Times write, “Investigators found a ‘two-page hand written manifesto in the pocket of assailant, 18-year-old Faisal Mohammad,”<sup>16</sup> Chan and Dillon of the New York Daily News Sheriff Warnke’s remark out of context citing, “Mohammad made a reference to Allah in his writing.”<sup>17</sup> These references to terrorism riddling the news reports of a student stabbing take no precautions against inciting fear in the community.

Making tensions worse in an already strained community, a CNN article chooses to conflate violent attacks. Michael Pearson of CNN cites the Merced incident with violence attributed to an Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) in the San Bernardino attack of December

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15. Michael Pearson, “Attacker Who Stabbed Students at UC Merced Had ISIS Flag, FBI Says,” News, CNN, March 18, 2016, accessed May 17, 2017, <http://www.cnn.com/2016/03/18/us/university-of-california-merced-stabbings-terror-inspired-fbi/index.html>.

16. Joseph Serna, Hailey Branson-Potts, and Diana Marcum, “UC Merced Assailant Was Angry over Study Group Snub, Note Says,” *L.A. Times*, November 5, 2015, accessed May 17, 2017, <http://www.latimes.com/local/lanow/la-me-ln-uc-merced-attack-20151105-story.html>.

17. Melissa Chan and Nancy Dillon, “Faisal Mohammad, Suspect in Stabbing Spree at UC Merced, Had Manifesto in Pocket, Was Angry He Was Kicked out of Study Group,” *New York Daily News*, November 5, 2015.

2, 2015, and the attack of the Philadelphia Police Office in January 2016. Pearson highlights information from the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) stating, “Mohammad had pro-ISIS propaganda on his laptop and the image of an ISIS flag in his backpack.”<sup>18</sup> This incendiary language has the dangerous consequence of heightening fear in the influential minority of Anglo community members creating reactionary impulses within the group that holds power.

It is only a year later that the news reveals how compassion was overlooked in the response to the tragedy at the University. An article in the local newspaper, *The Merced Sun Star*, describes the incident with a far broader perspective—a crisis in the life of a young student. In an article that starts with an interview of Mohammad’s father Wasim, the article reports that Faisal’s mother is still unable to talk about the tragedy.<sup>19</sup> The reporter Michelle Morgante quotes the father making the crisis of compassion plain: “Unfortunately the political environment is so disgusting that if anybody does anything, they just come to one conclusion—radicalization or terrorism, those kinds of things. Those are the buzzwords in politics. It’s just an easy scapegoat, rather than looking at a kid who spent his entire life to be a decent person and working hard, doing all the positive things in life.”<sup>20</sup> A family attorney Dan Mayfield reveals that “requests for relevant information available under the Freedom of Information Act and the state Public Records Act have been rejected for reasons that have not been fully revealed.”<sup>21</sup> Mayfield further states, “the Justice Department rebuffed an appeal saying in July that the information sought was exempt from required disclosure.”<sup>22</sup>

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18. Michael Pearson, "Attacker Who Stabbed Students...".

19. Michelle Morgante, “Family of Student Who Led UC Merced Attack Unable to Find Answers,” *Merced Sun Star*, November 3, 2016, accessed May 17, 2017, <http://www.mercedsunstar.com/news/local/education/uc-merced/article112440962.html>.

20. Ibid.

21. Ibid.

22. Ibid.

When a bereaved family struggles for answers that explain the greatest tragedy of their lives, the family seeks to be understood as a part of the community even when the broadcasters paint a picture of an outsider causing chaos. Morgante closes her article quoting Mohammad's father: "We are very sorry for what happened. At the same time, I would like to say please, don't make any judgments about Faisal. He spent his entire life to be a good citizen and a good son to the family. Unfortunately, he is not able to defend himself."<sup>23</sup> The family searched email accounts, talked to high school teachers and friends, and reviewed phone messages. Yet all that Wasim Mohammad could say is, "we could not find anything. We could not find anything."<sup>24</sup>

There are many facts that have been reported in this incident that might be drowned out by the buzzwords used in reporting "Breaking News." CNN posts, deeper in their report, indicate that "Investigators found no evidence Mohammad had worked with anyone or had any ties to any foreign terrorist organizations, said the FBI."<sup>25</sup> One of the victims of the assault, Byron Price, recalls, "Mohammad was on him, holding the knife over his head. He didn't know what he was doing. If he wanted to, he could've killed me."<sup>26</sup> Sheriff Warnke states, "There is still nothing to indicate anything, and I mean anything, that this is anything other than a teenage boy who got upset with fellow classmates and took it to the extreme."<sup>27</sup> So what is keeping this investigation from exploring other theories that are unrelated to religious/ethnic discrimination?

One suggested theory would be that mental illness may have played a role in the tragic incident at UC Merced. Here are some of the details that support an alternative theory: The closest contact on campus was Mohammad's roommate, Andrew Vasquez. He told KFSN news that his roommate was "antisocial" and didn't talk much; continuing, "walking to class, I never

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23. Ibid.

24. Michelle Morgante, "Family of Student Who..."

25. Michael Pearson, "Attacker Who Stabbed Students..."

26. Joseph Serna, "UC Merced Assailant..."

27. Ibid.

saw him walk with anybody.” The authors drive the point home, “Every time I would try and say something, he would just ignore it.”<sup>28</sup> Byron Price, who experienced the attack himself recalls, “I looked the guy square in the eyes. He looked like he was having fun. I also saw fear.”<sup>29</sup> The document that is being called a manifesto was “a chilling plot and a motive unrelated to organized hate groups and terrorism...it included zip ties to hold classmates hostage. Clear bags full of petroleum jelly that would be used to create a slip hazard so that Mohammad could ambush campus police and acquire a gun.”<sup>30</sup> The “chilling plot” was more like a cartoon scenario than a realistic strategy. Sheriff Warnke sums it up saying, “I think he had visions of grandeur. He had a pretty elaborate plan.”<sup>31</sup>

Reviewing the details reported in light of recent books about mental illness shows that the accounts of the stabbing incident include a variety of symptoms that are consistent with mental illness. Specifically, a mixed state in the life of a person suffering with Bipolar or Manic-Depressive Disorder has much in common with the crisis described: “Mixed episodes are episodes where both the despair of depression and the insane agitation and impulsivity of mania are present at the same time, resulting in a state of rabid, uncontrollable energy coupled with racing, horrible thoughts—people are sometimes led to kill themselves just to still the thoughts.”<sup>32</sup> Depression that renders a person catatonic, an unquenchable desire to inflict violence, the manic delusions of grandeur that lack rational perspective are all symptoms of a mixed state. Here are some details of bipolar disorder that are revealed in the memoir *Madness: A Bipolar Life* by Marya Hornbacher: “I fall back into the bed, felt myself sink like a stone, turning slowly through

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28. Ibid.

29. Ibid.

30. Melissa Chan and Nancy Dillon, “Faisal Mohammad, Suspect in Stabbing Spree at UC Merced, Had Manifesto in Pocket, Was Angry He Was Kicked out of Study Group.”

31. Ibid.

32. Marya Hornbacher, *Madness: A Bipolar Life* (Boston: Mariner Books, 2009), 283.



the water toward the bottom, where I rest, staring at the surface a long way above.” Feeling like an outsider, “I pretend to be one of them, but I’m not and never will be.” Describing a psychotic break that occurs in a mixed state, “I am viscerally, violently alive. I don’t know when I turn the corner from merely crazy to completely psychotic...we can see nothing but the chaos and terror of our own minds.” Violent impulses are prominent too: “the desire to do something with my hands, to strike, to break, is so powerful it’s all I can do to hold back my arms crossed tightly across my chest.” We cannot help but wonder why the investigators of the tragedy in Merced are not pouring over the facts to explore plausible theories that exist outside the description of terrorism.<sup>33</sup>

If it is true that the possibility of terrorist ideology is a driver of violence in the actions of Faisal Mohammad, it is also at least as likely that there is another cause. Consider these facts listed by Hornbacher in the back of her book: “5.8 million American adults have bipolar disorder. Average age of onset for bipolar disorder is 23. At least 50 percent of people with bipolar disorder are not receiving treatment. Ten years is the average amount of time bipolar symptoms are being experienced before families seek treatment.”<sup>34</sup> I find the reports of the stabbing lack consideration of important possible contributing factors and rely too heavily upon the wedge issue of terrorism.

So many compassion-centric alternatives are possible that the fact that this story is told the way it is and garners the responses that it has demonstrates what I am calling a crisis of compassion. The reports allow the community to jump to conclusions rather than calling the community to come together and ask questions. Curiosity and compassionate communication is blocked by language that triggers fear. First of all, the student was shot to death on a bridge,

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33. Ibid, 114–118.

34. Hornbacher, *Madness: A Bipolar Life*, 282.

standing by himself, holding a knife. The possibilities for non-lethal measures subduing this young man comprise a very extensive list. Even if we overlook this fact and assume that the first responder made the best decision at his disposal, there continues to be missed opportunities for compassion. The first assumptions and story lines are not about student mental health or a family's sudden and tragic loss. We didn't immediately hear about brave students and tactics that minimized the harm to the student body. We have not had a call for cross-cultural education or mental health and spiritual health improvements on campus. We at no point told the story of a vulnerable human youth facing adversity that altered his life and the lives of others; nor did we seek ways to ease the suffering that led to this tragedy or create thriving that would prevent it.

The crisis of compassion comes by way of the reporting and investigation of the incident through the polarizing lens of terrorism among people who look Middle Eastern and/or practice Islam. Even though the initial reports within the school community described Faisal as a lonely freshman that felt left out of study groups and socially ostracized, the reports and investigation led concerned citizens to unsupported conclusions and away from alternative, plausible theories of causation. Furthermore, this crisis of compassion has been vented through the responses of members of the Merced community to school officials. Vernetta Doty, director of the student life office at UC Merced, reports that the school received numerous phone calls for weeks after the incident berating the school's policy to admit students without regard for religious preference. One caller's comments are recalled by Doty: "How can you let Muslim Terrorists into our community?" The caller is not showing curiosity and compassionate inquiry. Instead, this statement is an example of the community coming to conclusions and disguising judgement as a question.

## **2: Theological Foundations**

### **Calling for Theologies of Transformation**

Religious leaders have a unique perspective on the communities in which they do their work. In this work there is a concerted effort to see communities and their members through the eyes of the divine. We get this idea from the teachers that founded our traditions: the Dharma that is taught in Buddhist communities tells us, “Our compassion is our Buddha seed or Buddha nature, our potential to become a Buddha. It is because all living beings possess this seed that they will all eventually become Buddha’s.”<sup>35</sup> Jesus also taught his disciples how to see the people in one’s path in his famous Sermon on the Mount.

It is my belief that the phrases Jesus is using do very specific things that speak to the presence of compassion in what many people call the greatest sermon ever preached. Jesus notices the humanity in all people by noticing the adversity people are facing spiritually and declaring his beloveds “blessed” despite the heretofore unmet longing of the soul. He notices those starving for mercy or righteousness. He also notices those who bear a spirit that is utterly impoverished. More than that, he notices the human condition of impossible goals like being a peacemaker and having pureness of heart. Compassion begins when the humanity is seen in the other, and compassion comes to fruition when the ease of suffering or the path to thriving are provided. These paths can be provided for minoritized communities and for individuals like Mohammad by noting the broken connections and loss rather than ascribing their behavior to an unsubstantiated threat. It is when the mutual humanity of community members is clearly observable that we plant the seed of compassion. Just look at the promises of hope and thriving that Jesus delivers in his statements:

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35. Venerable Geshe Kelsang Gyatso, “About Dharma,” About Dharma, accessed October 12, 2017, <http://www.aboutdharma.org/what-is-compassion.php/>.

And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain: and when he was set, his disciples came unto him: and he opened his mouth, and taught them, saying, 'Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled. Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God. Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.'<sup>36</sup>

By being committed to seeing the people of our communities by their needs and nature, we may come to a more spiritual understanding of the burdens in the lives of these people. I would find that seeing Faisal Mohammad as a human enduring persecution or as one who is mired in a time of poverty in spirit allows the true humanity of the young man to be revealed. Seeing a person as one who is persecuted and helping them know what a blessing might look like is very different from the cultural norms or demonizing the world and the people in it.

Some of the dominant determinants of human viewpoints in our communities may be gleaned by observing our broadcast media patterns. Doing so reveals a shocking contrast to the teachings above. Commercials imply that fashion is the opportunity to stand out against the bland backdrop of others or to blend in with the privileged. In an effort to meet news consumer preferences, news is broadcast in terms of what is threatening the watcher's safety and wellbeing. Political leaders have talking points so that they activate the extreme ideals of their base and don't veer from ideological scripts that polarize the public. One possible conclusion from these broadcast patterns is that communication platforms see our communities as groups of individuals that are self-centered, fear-driven, and readily influenced by the use of ideological mantras.

Left unchecked, isolation and limited exposure to important and informative civil discourse could very well reify the beliefs that permeate media interpretations of communities

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36. Matt 5:1-12, NRSV.

throughout the United States. The call for theologies of transformation is rooted in face-to-face relationships and seek to bring individuals into greater contact with the stories and experiences of their neighbors. In an effort to counter communities defined by isolation, Sarah Griffith Lund writes, “The power of our testimonies is the power to work through, heal, and eventually transform our suffering.”<sup>37</sup> In an effort to encourage early communities of faith to be communities that are modeled upon the values of Jesus of Nazareth, the apostle Paul writes that we are to “bear one another’s burdens and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.”<sup>38</sup> In my view, for religious leaders to answer a calling for the theological transformation of communities, said leaders would do well to mine their own traditions for dialogue and teachings that reveal the power of compassion.

### **A Christian Theology of Compassionate Diversity**

Cultivating compassion can be more than a happy ideal. It can be demonstrated that cultivating compassion is a behavior practiced by Jesus and celebrated by the writer of the Gospel of John as a significant and meaningful spiritual path. An example of this is shown in the Gospel of story of Jesus’ engagement with and compassion for the Syrophoenician woman.<sup>39</sup>

We submit that Jesus demonstrates in the gospel story how to see, with loving eyes, people who have foreign traditions, different ethnicities, and unfamiliar languages. Compassion does not always exist within the rigid structures of our lives and our communities, but it can be cultivated when one chooses to “be moved in one’s depth by another’s experience and respond in ways that intend to ease suffering or promote flourishing within the person,”<sup>40</sup> writes Frank Rogers, author of *Practicing Compassion*. Consider that this story includes Jesus in the home of

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37. Sarah Griffith Lund, *Blessed Are the Crazy: Breaking the Silence about Mental Illness, Family, and Church* (St. Louis, Missouri: Chalice Press, 2014), 1450. Kindle edition.

38. Gal 6:2, NRSV.

39. Matt 15:21, NRSV.

40. Rogers, *Practicing Compassion*, 32.

a woman who suffers from the illness of her daughter. This woman, the mother, was from a different country that embraced a different native language. She was not familiar with the culture of Jesus and the Jews. When Jesus took time to listen to the woman, He saw her burden, her faith, and her humanity. In the end Jesus takes action that lessens her burden and causes her and her daughter to thrive. This scripture may be evidence of mindfulness being practiced by Jesus himself. An author that sees a need for such a mindfulness in our communities writes, “The purpose of Christian mindfulness is to open our hearts and minds to the still-speaking God, to create time and space for the indwelling of Christ’s Spirit among us.”<sup>41</sup> By using the Compassion Practice, we have the opportunity to convert one’s mindset to a state of openness and cultivate our ability to live out of the indwelling Spirit of Christ.

Christian writers go so far as to see transforming power in the practice of compassion. “Christian teachers also have admonished their followers to love not only their neighbor as themselves—to care for the suffering, the poor, and the outcast—but also more radically, to love their enemies as well—to forgive those who trespass against them, to bless those who curse them, and to return good to all, even those who do evil.”<sup>42</sup> Walter Wink informs us that Jesus compared God’s compassion to the sun that shines on the just and unjust alike in the fifth chapter of Matthew’s Gospel and the sixth chapter of Luke’s gospel. He summarized the essence of his spiritual path in the following: “Be all-inclusively compassionate, just as your father in heaven is all-inclusively compassionate.”<sup>43</sup>

### **Diverse Traditions Embracing Compassion**

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41. Lund, *Blessed Are the Crazy*, 1716. Kindle edition.

42. Rogers, *Practicing Compassion*, 16.

43. Walter Wink and Walter Wink, *Engaging the Powers: Discernment and Resistance in a World of Domination, The Powers*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), 396.

In 2008, Karen Armstrong, an honored teacher of religion, created her Charter for Compassion. This charter has a website to garner signatures from the many varied religions of the world. To date, there have been more than 120,000 signatures with leaders of every major religion represented.<sup>44</sup> Karen Armstrong writes, “teachers and guides from all faiths, all wisdom schools, and all spiritual traditions extol compassion as the truest mark of our humanity, the deepest essence of the transcendence interlaced with the universe, and the most promising path to peace on our planet.”<sup>45</sup> The point that Armstrong is making continues to ring true: “cultivating compassion is both meaningful and important to the world at large.”<sup>46</sup>

Specifics about the practices of compassion in a variety of traditions are clear in the writing of these experts as well. Karen Armstrong, the noted scholar of religion, continues to observe that teachers and guides from all faiths, all wisdom schools, and all spiritual traditions extol compassion as the true mark of our humanity, the deepest essence of the transcendence interlaced with the universe, and the most promising path to peace on the planet.<sup>47</sup> Her Charter for Compassion reminds us that some version of the Golden Rule is the ethical core of every religion.<sup>48</sup> Jewish rabbis and scholars, for example, consider the ethic of compassion the summative commandment of the Torah. This is witnessed to in the famous Talmudic tale in which a Pagan approaches the great Hillel and promises to convert to Judaism if Hillel can recite the entire of the Torah while standing on one leg. Hillel, up to the task, responds simply, “what is hateful to yourself, do not do to another. That is the whole Torah, the rest is all commentary.”<sup>49</sup>

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44. “*Charter for Compassion*,” November 12, 2008, accessed May 22, 2018, <https://charterforcompassion.org/charter/who-has-signed-the-charter-for-compassion>.

45. Karen Armstrong, *Twelve Steps to a Compassionate Life*, 2011, 50-51.

46. *Ibid*, 4.

47. *Ibid*, 4.

48. Rogers, *Practicing Compassion*, 17.

49. Armstrong, *Twelve Steps to a Compassionate Life*, 50-51.

Buddhist scholars have much to tell us about the ethic of compassion in the Buddhist tradition. The rest is but commentary to Buddhists as well. The four boundless attitudes that foster enlightenment are all facets of connective care: compassion, loving-kindness, joyful delight in another's delight, and equanimity that extends such caring regard to all being—animals and strangers, the loving and difficult—with unwavering impartiality.<sup>50</sup> Frank Rogers reminds us of Christina Feldman's story of the teachings of the Buddha. Indeed, when a disciple asked the Buddha, "Would it be true to say that part of our training is for love and compassion?" the Buddha succinctly responded, "No. ALL of our training is for love and compassion."<sup>51</sup>

### **Summary**

Teaching the gifts of compassion offers multiple possible benefits for leaders that would seek to have a transformative effect on the communities they are serving. It is possible that the commonality of the teaching about compassion would help people of diverse religious perspectives find common ground. It is also a possibility that a diverse group of people would be able to agree that compassion has meaning in their own lives, in their own religious teachings, and as an important need in their own community. Also, learning about compassion from the perspective of people whose culture and religious ideas are different may create conversations that bring added light to the value of compassion.

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50. John J. Makransky and Philip Osgood, *Awakening through Love: Unveiling Your Deepest Goodness* (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2007).

51. Fred Eppsteiner, ed., *The Path of Compassion: Writing on Socially Engaged Buddhism*, Rev. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (Berkeley, Calif: Parallax Press, 1988), 19.



### **3: Obstacles to Compassion**

#### **Compassion as an Ideal**

The idea that compassion and the lack thereof can be a determining factor in the health of a person or community is growing in popularity. The research that Jazaieri et al undertake demonstrates that learning a simple meditation practice may result in the cultivation of compassion. They find (from a study published in 2013), “Unlike other positive emotions, compassion gives rise to altruistic behavior and generosity, essentially, compassion gives rise to a powerful motivation that is by definition, focused on others, which naturally results in greater social connectedness.”<sup>52</sup> Jazaieri headed a team of ten researchers at Stanford University to establish quantitative results regarding the ability to cultivate compassion through a simple meditation called Mindfulness Meditation. This team is motivated by the following belief: “Most psychosocial intervention research has focused on the alleviation of negative emotional states. However, there is growing interest in cultivating positive emotional states and qualities. One particular target that has recently been emerging is compassion, which has long been valued by religious traditions including Christianity, Judaism, and Islam.”<sup>53</sup> By expanding upon the work of Jazaieri et al., incorporating a compassion specific practice, and opening the pathways to sharing personal experiences, I propose the health of the Merced community can be positively impacted.

#### **Domains of Compassion**

For the purpose of carrying forward the work of Jazaieri et al to our specific context, I believe that the use of the domains of compassion posited by the Stanford project (Enhancing Compassion: A Randomized Controlled Trial of a Compassion Cultivation Training Program)

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52. Hooria Jazaieri et al., “Enhancing Compassion: A Randomized Controlled Trial of a Compassion Cultivation Training Program,” *Journal of Happiness Studies* 14, no. 4 (August 2013): 1113–26, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10902-012-9373-z>.

53. Ibid, 1113-26 .

provides an important base from which to distinguish different domains of compassion as well as analyze any varying in these domains that would suggest an individual's or a group's movement within these domains by either growth or reduction. The domains to which we are referring are these: compassion for others, compassion from others, and compassion for self. The key concept that is used to determine whether compassion grows or diminishes is the amount of fear that an individual may harbor for the domain of compassion that is being described.

### **Compassion for Others**

Compassion for others may be the most common way in which we experience compassion. Students in high schools are commonly encouraged to engage in community service projects. Churches refer to ministry in terms of outreach and acts of kindness. Frequently it is a foregone conclusion that some population is experiencing an unmet need. Then some relational groundwork needs to take place to create a means to offer and receive compassion. When people or institutions experience a sense of well-being and abundance, it has become a cultural expectation for them to look for ways in which to extend generosity to others.

These cultural norms are strong and bear the benefit of gaining respectability as a member of the community. Yet, compassion for others is not a condition that can simply be assumed for any given population. Jazaieri's team notes, "compassion for others is not always expressed and in fact, can be suppressed and inhibited. Some people may fail to experience compassion while others may actually experience a fear of compassion (for others, from others, and for self). Specifically, one may fear that extending compassion towards another may threaten one's own self-interest or the interests of one's identified group."<sup>54</sup> When we believe that the object of our compassion may be disingenuous about their level of need, we often decide to

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54. Jazaieri et al., *"Enhancing Compassion..."*, 1113-26.

withhold compassion. We make judgments about someone's ability to create the benefit they need for themselves or about our own ability to afford the act of compassion. The threats that one might consider before deciding to engage in compassion for others includes real or imagined scarcity, vulnerability of personhood, vulnerability of pride, or even the awareness of the generalized overwhelming need in our midst.

### **Compassion from Others**

The domain that we are describing as compassion from others would include receiving aid in goods or services that meet a need in our own lives. To receive compassion from others, our need must be perceivable at some level by others. Usually such a need is also known to the party on the receiving end of compassion. And then, both parties must be open to the act of compassion taking place. Consider the adolescent in a mentoring program like Big Brothers or a person with limited abilities being helped to cross a street. The recipients in a free medical clinic are receiving compassion as are the families benefitting from pro bono legal services.

If we want to discover the obstacles in the domain, all we need to do is consider the following question: when, in this day and age, is it admirable to be the recipient of compassion from others? "Fear of receiving compassion from others (e.g., feeling like one does not deserve or should not accept care and kindness from others), has been associated with self-criticism, insecure attachment, depression, anxiety, and stress. For some, being the object or recipient of compassion can create fear reactions, avoidance, or generate negative emotions such as grief or loneliness."<sup>55</sup> If we are intent upon increasing an individual's ability or amenability to receiving compassion from others, it will be necessary to minimize the fear triggers that cause would-be recipients to shy away from these overtures in the first place.

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55. Jazaieri et al., *"Enhancing Compassion..."*, 1113-26.

## **Compassion for Self**

Maybe the most difficult domain of our study in which we propose compassion can be cultivated is the domain of compassion for self. A person cultivating compassion like this would be willing to withhold self-criticism. Instead of seeing suffering as a weakness, one would choose to be open to one's own suffering and willing to extend kindness while withholding judgment. "Self-compassion has been associated with positive qualities including greater coping with adversity, life satisfaction, emotional intelligence, social connectedness, mastery of goals, personal initiative, curiosity, wisdom, happiness, optimism, and positive affect."<sup>56</sup> Yet, even though the benefits are worth pursuing, a great many opportunities for self-compassion are passed over.

There are fears that play the role of obstacle in this domain and they are described by the Stanford researchers: "the fear of compassion: for others, from others, for self, and self-compassion within a therapist population (n = 53; Age (M) = 39.52) and a student population (n = 222; Age (M) = 22.70). The correlational findings suggested that the fear of compassion for self and compassion from others appeared to reflect a difficulty in experiencing affiliative emotions in general."<sup>57</sup> I interpret this comment to a scientific explanation about the resistance we have to compassion in the presence of underlying fears.

## **Obstacles in a Quantitative Model**

In order to quantify the experience of obstructed compassion it is necessary to create a self-reporting tool that helps the participant uncover various expressions of fear that may be present in each of the three domains. When I showed the participant a statement that proclaims

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56. Jazaieri et al., *"Enhancing Compassion..."*, 1113-26.

57. Ibid, 1113-26.

the presence of a fear that obstructs compassion such as “people will take advantage of me if they see me as too compassionate” and offer five graduated levels of agreement, it was possible to assign a quantity to the obstacle at hand. The five graduated levels will have a numerical value assigned in the range of 5 to 25, with each step increasing by five. When the values of each statement on the questionnaire are totaled, we will have a large number in the range of 120 - 600. This larger value will be a quantified term known as the Compassion Fear Index (CFI).

By using a quantitative tool, we can compare the self-reported values of the responses of our participants. We will have the participants respond to the statements representing fears in each of the three domains. These participants will respond to the same statements after our session work is complete. Where the quantities vary, we will be able to evaluate the participants’ ability to cultivate compassion by the relative presence of fear that is being self-reported through the questionnaire. The quantitative model will allow us to use numbers to represent the relative changes if they exist.

### **Cultivating Compassion**

Several practitioners of compassion-based training in a variety of contexts have shown positive results in the effort to enhance compassion. “From a Buddhist perspective, compassion can be trained through mental practices, such as meditation. Only recently, however, has the cultivation of compassion been evaluated empirically. Several compassion programs now exist, including Compassion-Focused Therapy (CFT) and Compassionate Mind Training (CMT).”<sup>58</sup> Additionally, Kabat-Zinn developed (Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction) and in the process found increases in self-reported self-compassion in clinical and non-clinical populations.<sup>59</sup>

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58. Jazaieri et al., *Enhancing Compassion...*, 1113-26.

59. Bob Stahl and Elisha Goldstein, *A Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction Workbook* (Oakland, CA: New Harbinger Publications, 2010), <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&scope=site&db=nlebk&db=nlabk&AN=419953>.

The possibility of cultivating compassion using practices of meditation has informed our interest in producing a course of meditation practices that would benefit the community of Merced, California. The Jazaieri group showed that a nine-week compassion cultivation training that uses the Mindfulness Meditation was able to significantly reduce the fears that are an obstacle to compassion in the three domains discussed above.<sup>60</sup> Our intent will be to create an environment that reduces the amount of fear that the participants self-report through a questionnaire that highlights the same three domains of compassion that were developed by the Jazaieri team. This environment will not be simply training the group to do a Mindfulness Meditation practice like the Jazaieri study. Instead, we will practice meditation in a group. The meditation will be the Compassion Practice developed by Frank Rogers.<sup>61</sup> We will meet for five sessions of eighty minutes. Additionally, I use for discussion the practice of Mutual Invitation developed by Law.<sup>62</sup> Finally, we will learn about compassion together and have time to discuss our various faith experiences as they interact with this list of practices.

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60. Jazaieri et al., *"Enhancing Compassion..."*, 1113-26.

61. Rogers, *Practicing Compassion*.

62. Eric H. F. Law, *Holy Currencies: Six Blessings for Sustainable Missional Ministries* (St. Louis, Missouri: Chalice Press, 2013).

## 4: Methodology

### Methodology Sources

The resources that have given birth to a methodology for the Merced Compassion Cultivation Project (MCCP) provide tried and true courses for self-awareness and personal growth with respect to compassion cultivation. The Center for Engaged Compassion at the Claremont School of Theology, founded by Dr. Andy Dreitcer and Dr. Frank Rogers, has developed practices for meditation and spiritual growth that are “unique processes of ‘engaged compassion’ that transform desires to help others into practical actions that change the world for good.”<sup>63</sup> To this end, Rogers has written the book *Practicing Compassion* (in 2015), which is meant to help readers and students use a particular course of guided meditations that lead the practitioner to new understandings of self, others, and the divine source of compassion that the practitioner understands.<sup>64</sup> Other work is being done to discover ways of “Cultivating Positive emotional states and qualities,”<sup>65</sup> specifically compassion: Dr. Hooria Jazaieri led a group of ten psychologists and meditation practitioners to publish a research paper in the Springer Science-Business Media B.V. 2012. This paper is titled “Enhancing Compassion: A Randomized Controlled Trial of a Compassion Cultivation Training Program.” This team of researchers were based at Stanford University in California and sought a quantitative trial to demonstrate that the practice of up to 9 weeks of mindfulness meditation would cultivate a positive emotional state, namely compassion.<sup>66</sup>

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63 “*Wise, Skillful, Practical Compassion for the Good of the World.*,” Center for Engaged Compassion, accessed November 14, 2017, <http://www.centerforengagedcompassion.com>.

64. Rogers, *Practicing Compassion*.

65. Jazaieri et al., “*Enhancing Compassion...*”, 1113-26.

66. Jazaieri et al., “*Enhancing Compassion...*”, 1113-26.

The methods informed by Jazaieri et al are being used in M CCP to form the basis of the research tool that we are using to determine personal change that would lead to the cultivation of compassion. As discussed in chapter three, the Stanford researchers decided that compassion cultivation is blocked by a system of fears that would stand in the way of one's openness to compassion. The Stanford team posits that these fears can be divided into three areas: "Fear of compassion for others, fear of compassion from others, and fear of compassion for self."<sup>67</sup> These researchers created a questionnaire for their subjects to use as a self-reporting tool. The research paper did not offer the exact tool that was used in Stanford, but the description was specific enough for a tool to be created out of inspiration from the earlier study.

The M CCP study is using a questionnaire that asks participants to self-report on levels of fear related to compassion by reading statements that demonstrate a specific fear and deciding to what extent the subject is currently in agreement. (To examine the tool we are using see Appendix D.) This questionnaire has a scale of five options for each statement of fear: strongly disagree, disagree, sometimes, agree, and strongly agree. The statements are grouped into three sections: compassion for others, compassion from others, and compassion for self. Each group has eight statements (i.e. if I try to advance the benefits of people in the community at large, my people will get even less.) The participants in the M CCP study are asked to self-report on this questionnaire prior to engaging in the project and again one week after the project has ended. I will assign numerical values to the answers and total the sheet to determine a subject's baseline compassion fear index. The second questionnaire will serve to inform us of any changes reported and to have a numerical representation of the changes for purposes of analysis. This numerical representation will heretofore be referenced as a Compassion Fear Index (CFI).

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67. Jazaieri et al., *"Enhancing Compassion..."*, 1113-26.



The book and course information called *Practicing Compassion* was provided and used with permission.<sup>68</sup> The course that Dr. Rogers is teaching uses guided meditation practices that lead a participant (together with the divine source of compassion that they understand) on an individual's journey toward cultivating compassion. Rogers provided the researcher with recordings of these meditations for use in this project. Also included in the book are moving stories that illustrate acts of compassion and in-the-moment written meditation practices provided by Rogers that can be used as homework between sessions.<sup>69</sup>

Each of the five sessions were designed to have areas of focus that would theoretically prepare a practitioner to address the fears and/or obstacles to compassion that the study presupposes each person carries through life. The first two sessions are centered on the practitioner's ability to relive the relationship that they have had in life with the source of compassion as they understand it—one might describe this as reliving one's relationship with God. The first session used Frank Roger's "Awareness Examine Meditation." The second session would make use of the "Sacred Moment Meditation" by Rogers. Both of these practices explore times in the life of a practitioner that have potentially been enhanced by the source of compassion that the practitioner understands. The second two sessions were centered on tools for the practitioner to hold one's self in a growing experience of compassion. The participants would need to learn about Roger's concepts of U-Turn and FLAG (described below). In these sessions, the "Welcoming Presence Meditation" helps a practitioner make space and create a non-anxious mental space for emotions that enter the meditation. The "Difficult Emotion Practice" is used in week four to help a practitioner cultivate compassion for the source of one's own emotional experience. Finally, the fifth week would use the same tools from weeks three and four to

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68. Rogers, *Practicing Compassion*.

69. Ibid.

cultivate compassion for a person other than themselves. Week five would make use of a meditation by Rogers called “Compassion Practice with a Difficult Other (A)”.

After the Compassion Fear Index Questionnaire is administered and communal meditation, there is discussion. The sessions are designed to use a form of communication called Mutual Invitation.<sup>70</sup> Mutual Invitation assumes that a question or topic is introduced to a group. Then an individual is invited to comment on the topic. After the invitation is made, the individual has three choices: comment on the topic, pass for now (future invitations are still welcome), or pass (topic is not addressed). Once the choice is made and executed, the person invited becomes the inviter and randomly chooses another member of the group to invite. This process is repeated until the discussion invites everyone in the room. In step one, there is an initial question for discussion. The first session this question is a means of introduction. In following sessions this question is a reminder of last week’s practice. Step two is the telling or reading of a compelling story of compassion. Step three is an invitation session to discuss the story. Step four is engaging in the prerecorded meditation practice that was specific to the discussion for the week in which the group is engaged. Step five is an invitation session to discuss a facet of the meditation. Step six is handing out an “In the Moment Meditation” from Roger’s book.<sup>71</sup> The participants are asked to continue the practice daily on their own between sessions.

The tools essential to participating in Roger’s Compassion Practice are the U-Turn and FLAG. The U-Turn is a device that allows a practitioner to mend any “disconnect from the Practitioner’s natural capacities for care and connection,”<sup>72</sup> Rogers explains that this exercise calls one to center and relax through taking intentional breaths and then follow a pattern referred to as PULSE.

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70. Law, *Holy Currencies*.

71. Rogers, *Practicing Compassion*, 58.

72 Ibid, 30.

PULSE in the pattern:

P – Pay attention. Cultivating a nonjudgmental, nonreactive awareness of whatever agitation is present within you.

U – Understanding empathically. Listen for and be moved by the suffering hidden within the cry of this meditation—the fear, longing, or aching wound in need of tending.

L – Loving connection. As you are moved by the suffering within (you/another), extend tender care toward the need or wound that presents itself.

S – Sensing the sacredness. Recognize and savor the cosmic expanse of compassion that holds and heals every suffering within (you/another).

E – Embodying new life. Notice the gifts and qualities of restored humanity that are being birthed within (you/another)<sup>73</sup>

The practitioner intentionally uses time in meditation to cultivate awareness, compassion, and pathways for thriving. The connection made here also depends on understanding another one of Roger's concepts which presupposes the existence of a common reality in humanity such that there exists within a set of underlying obstacles to compassion called interior movements. These movements are represented by FLAG, an acronym which means the following:

F – Fear. The movement yearns is terrified of an imminent danger—perhaps rejection, ridicule, violation, attack—and mobilizes to protect us from the threat

L – Longing. The movement yearns for something essential to our flourishing—for renewal, freedom, love, or life.

A – Aching wound. Pain from the past still stings and bleeds and when triggered in the present, cries out to be held and held. These wounds could come from shame, abuse, abandonment, or neglect.

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73. Rogers, *Practicing Compassion*.

G – Gifts obstructed. The movement holds the burgeoning seed of talent or personal capacity that has been denied and buried and is bursting to be claimed and nurtured into flourishing—the gifts, perhaps, of your voice, power, tenderness, or art.<sup>74</sup>

Teaching and using these tools for the guided meditations provide the core system for cultivating compassion that the MCCP posits would cause CFI numbers to drop.

### **Methodological Plan**

The decisions about methodology were made for the purposes of establishing both a set of volunteer participants from the community of Merced and to gather some understanding of the participants' context. How the participants talk about themselves, their religious and/or spiritual practices, and their place in the community were some of the primary concerns. Receiving the proper releases and allowing each participant to understand the researchers' partners in accountability was a priority (see appendix p.69-72). Finally, a baseline was established for measuring the participants' obstacles to cultivating compassion.

Establishing the group of participants would be key to addressing the growing diversity in the Merced community. Careful attention was paid to creating a level of comfort as well as the intentional challenge created by joining a group of diverse strangers. To this end, the researcher decided to recruit participants in pairs by asking religious leaders in the community to make recommendations. The response from faith leaders exceeded the researcher's expectations with regard to active, positive, support for the project.

The recruiting occurred in the following manner: the Ahmadiyya Muslim community in Merced encouraged a young adult husband and wife to join the project. The Reformed Jewish Community called Etz Chayim (Tree of Life) immediately thought of a lay leader to contact.

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<sup>74</sup>. Ibid, 71.

Upon contact, the leader volunteered and took the initiative to recruit a friend from her community; these were two retired members of the faith community. There is an interfaith women's group meeting at the United Methodist Church of Merced. This group allowed the researcher to introduce the project and ask for volunteers. The phone number for two young adult Hindu sisters was put forward, and the leader of the interfaith group volunteered as a person who claims the identity of Spiritual but not Religious. This leader also recruited a friend with a similar outlook on religious practice. I then approached the past president of the Hmong Women's Fellowship. This leader was able to commit herself and recruit a coworker that was a Hmong Christian at a different congregation. Two members of the United Methodist Church of Merced joined the project, one single adult member of Euro-American decent and the other an undocumented mother of four. With this group we had the original set of 12 participants.

These volunteers were all brought to an orientation meeting. At the orientation, the volunteers received a clear understanding of the commitment they were being asked to accept. It would mean meeting on a weekly basis for approximately 80 minutes. The meetings would have the same format: a round of personal identity sharing, a story about compassion in action, a 25-minute guided meditation, a round of personal reflection on the meditation, and a weekly meditation handout to be used as an at home assignment between sessions. For those who were still willing to commit their time, the orientation would go on to a phase of questionnaires and release signing.

On paper, the baseline understanding of the participants was a process that took about 30 minutes. The release form was read aloud and signed in front of witnesses. Then a list of seven open ended questions were offered as follows: "Do you identify with a faith community? If so, what community? How would you describe your practice of religion? How do you describe your

ethnic background? How are you connected to the community of Merced? Length of time in the community? Have you had any experience with meditation? If so, how much? (see Appendix C)

The surveying tool for this project is the final questionnaire described above and available as Appendix D. The questionnaire would be used as a tool to quantify levels of fear in the participants (the Compassion Fear Index). Each category on the scale was assigned a numerical value from five to twenty-five. When the participant fills out the survey in the orientation meeting it is possible to assign a baseline numerical value to the list of twenty-four statements of fear. After the project completes the five sessions, the questionnaire is applied again. The CFI in the final questionnaire are compared to the CFI at the baseline. The variances are what provides the results to be analyzed.

### **Methodological Complications**

Predictably, bringing together twelve people with diverse social locations, religious affiliations, and responsibilities created cause for modifying the methodology. The first problem was that there was no single day that all of these people could meet for the five sessions: for some, the holy celebration of Ramadan was an obstacle—jobs played a role, as did family obligations. The solution was to do the same practice twice per week—once on Tuesday evening and the other on Saturday afternoon. The rule was that we would try to have at least five members of the group at each session.

The next complication was that the commitment was unmanageable for the Hindu sisters. This realization happened after the first Tuesday gathering. The good news is that the participants took it upon themselves to adjust to this problem. One member of the Jewish Community was so deeply interested in the study that she immediately went home and recruited her husband (an atheist member of the Jewish community) and then forwarded some contacts to me that were

from a previous interfaith organization in the Merced community. The result was that we were able to fill the empty spot in the group of participants with a member of the Bahá'í faith community.

The guided meditations being provided by Rogers from a set of recordings that he made for use in Compassion Practice teaching events were an excellent resource that also needed adjustment. The fact that we had people in the group that did not necessarily have images of the divine or language about the divine in common created some discomfort during the meditation practice. I was notified that some language should be avoided. One of the Jewish participants communicated that the word “grace” disconnected her from the practice because she associates that word with Christian language about the divine. Another participant communicated that the ambient noise in the room was distracting and did not allow her to focus well on the guidance for meditation being offered by the researcher. The group welcomed the idea of adding a recording of calming background noise. After making several attempts, the ambience only truly became satisfying for all in session five.

A pattern and practice for sharing needed to be established to avoid the problems in small groups that arise from group dynamics that create imbalance. In any group there are members who would be ready to answer any question immediately and dominate the room by commenting on the sharing of others. There are also members that would be happy to withhold their participation in the conversation in the absence of a direct invitation to speak. The Mutual Invitation Process described above was used to limit the complications that arise in small group discussion settings.<sup>75</sup>

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75. Law, *Holy Currencies*.

## Methodology Development

The use of previously tested resources was extremely valuable in this process. This research methodology is dependent upon a researcher's ability to make effective use of the practices developed in advance by scholars in the field. The effective use of Mutual Invitation and the Compassion Practice were both developed through several months of small group studies in which people independently came together for purposes of spiritual exploration. These exploration sessions, though not a part of the study, would develop a deep and working understanding of the practices that would later be used in the study. No data was collected or analyzed in these sessions, yet facility in explanation for and use of specific skills were established. Furthermore, potential pitfalls in the small group sessions were discovered. For instance, the researcher learned that anxiety can occur in the "Mutual Invitation Process" because people who are used to being able to express ready answers at will may feel uncomfortably restrained. Another example was the discovery that there is a tendency for some practitioners to fixate on a difficult other that is responsible for significant personal injury, even in an introductory course.<sup>76</sup> This tendency should be avoided in the work of beginners. A practitioner engaging in the "Compassion Practice" as an introduction should be cautioned. Practicing transformation of emotional injuries should be begun by focusing on minor emotional interior movements.<sup>77</sup> This way, practitioners can develop skills upon which can be built greater capacities. Therefore, it must be understood that duplicating the MCCP would require significant investment in the time to develop skills that are useful in the research methodology.

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<sup>76</sup>. Ibid

<sup>77</sup>. Rogers, *Practicing Compassion*.



## **5: Discussion and Analysis**

### **Overview**

The Merced Compassion Cultivation Project (MCCP) has delivered both data and experiences that may add value to conversations about cultivating compassion in and with communities that are growing more diverse over time. The qualitative sample used included eight different expressions of faith experience: Hmong Baptist, Methodist, Bahá'í, Ahmadiyya Muslim, Atheist, Hmong Methodist, Jewish Reformed, & Spiritual but not Religious. The sample is both male and female ages twenty-eight to seventy-eight. The group included legal immigrants from Fiji and Laos: a refugee granted political asylum; an undocumented immigrant from Mexico City; a second generation immigrant from Laos; a third generation Central Valley native; and, people who located in the area as a result of Military orders to serve at Castle Airforce base.

The final results were accumulated through the complete participation of eleven participants. Twelve people managed to attend all five sessions of meditation and discussion. One of the eleven resigned prior to completing the final questionnaire. The final questionnaire was distributed at the last session to be completed no earlier than one week after the session. Eight of the questionnaires were collected on July 8, 2017, which was ten days after the last session. The final three were collected by email by July 15, 2017.

The questionnaire that was used (see Appendix D) allows for analysis in a variety of forms. There are three sections being studied through the numerical value of self-reported barriers to compassion. I asked eight questions to establish a Compassion Fear Index (CFI) for compassion for others; eight questions to establish a CFI for compassion from others; and, eight questions to establish a CFI for compassion for self. When grouped together, it is possible to note

the CFI that is set for each question both before the sessions and after. This analysis looks at the whole group, at each of the three categories of questions, and at the impact on each question.

I noticed also that some of the participants had circumstances that could significantly alter the ability to engage the process effectively. This observation caused us to also do analysis with the exclusion of three participant exceptions. To this end, there is a section where we analyze a group called the “Qualified Group” which is eight participants. This section of analysis excludes three participants to which we refer as “Exceptions.”

The three participants that we include in the group of exceptions for the secondary analysis have a variety of justifications for being in this group. Exception number one is based upon a low baseline questionnaire. The questionnaire in total has a CFI Range from 120 to 600. The average CFI is 276 and the median CFI is 285 in the first questionnaire. Exception number one starts with an opening CFI of 190, which is so close to the minimum that the likelihood of movement is extraordinarily limited. The final questionnaire leaves this participant with a CFI of 205, a change of negative 15 or negative 8 percent. Exception number two came to the group with an atheist perspective. This participant was able to attend regularly and participate in discussion. Each week the participant would remind us that the ability to engage with “a source of compassion that (s)he understood” did not exist. This participant felt that for this reason the meditation was not accessible. The change in CFI for exception number 2 is similar to that of exception #1—negative 20 or negative 7 percent. Exception number three was able to attend all sessions and discussion as well. This participant gave the impression of meditation difficulties by using a cell phone and texting throughout the meditation practices. I am including this participant as an exception because it is reasonable to assume that meditation was inaccessible.

There are several Figures that will be useful as we discuss and analyze the results of the MCCP study. Appnedix E is the original questionnaire results for the eleven participants that completed the study. Also in this appendix is the final questionnaire result for the same eleven participants. Index E is the variance calculated for each question, each participant, each category, and the group as a whole. These tables also include a graphic illustration for the change that the group of eleven experienced in each question and each category.

The group of eleven without the three exceptions is a group of eight that we call the ‘qualified group.’ There are separate but similar tables for the qualified group (QG); such as, the original questionnaire for the qualified group, the final questionnaire for the QG, and the Variance calculated for each question, each participant, and each category of the QG. The last table is a graphic illustration for the change the qualified group experienced in each question and each category.

### **Whole Sample Analysis**

The unedited sample that completed the MCCP merits discussion because real world efforts to use the Compassion Practice as a means of accessing meditation for the purpose of compassion cultivation will likely include participants that, for one reason or another, experience difficulty engaging the process. The MCCP had eleven participants and three of these participants experienced only the slightest signs of change in the aggregate individual Compassion Fear Index (CFI). The aggregate Individual CFI had a range from 120 to 600. Participant #7 had a CFI of 305 and experienced a positive change of 10. Participant #13 had a CFI of 270 and experienced a negative change of 20. Finally, participant #14 had a CFI of 190 and experienced a negative change of 15. In these three participants, there were no changes positive or negative that exceeded 8 percent. Our explanation for considering these participants

“exceptions” is offered above, but for the purpose of seeing the results of this study in their entirety, all are included.

The broadest view of the results is evident in looking at the group as a whole. The range for the CFI of the group of 11 participants is 1320 to 6600. The questionnaire was offered with 24 questions in three categories—eight questions per category. Each question was answered with a mark in one of five levels of agreement. These levels were assigned to statements of fear that would be obstacles to compassion. The response choices were strongly disagree, disagree, sometimes, agree, and strongly agree. If the average response to questions was strongly disagree, the group CFI would be 1320. When the average response was disagreeing, the group CFI would be 2640. The original group CFI is 3035. This number indicates that the group was leaning on average toward sometimes agreeing. The final questionnaire had a group CFI of 2520. The net change is 515 or 17 percent decrease in reported fears as an obstacle to compassion. The group reduced fear to the point that the average response was disagreeing with the statements of fear.

When studied as a whole, the categories of fear had a story to tell as well. As a reminder, the categories are Fear of Compassion for Others, Fear of Compassion from Others, and Fear of Compassion for Self. The original questionnaire demonstrated that Fear of Compassion for Others had the lowest starting CFI of 895. Yet the final results showed that this category was also the category of greatest decreased fear. After the final questionnaire this category dropped 185 CFI points or 21 percent. The category with the highest CFI as a group was Fear of Compassion from Others with an opening CFI of 1110. This category had the second largest reduction in fear in the end—175 CFI points or 16 percent. The category of Fear of Compassion for Self began with a CFI of 1030 and reduced by 155 CFI points or 15 percent.

The Individual results showed a great deal of significant individual change. The original questionnaire had a median CFI of 285, a median change of 60, and a median change percentage of 20 percent. The individual CFI range was 120 - 600. The most dramatic change was participant #4. This participant began with a CFI of 235 and had a 95 CFI point change, reaching 40 percent reduction in fear. Participant #3 also had a 95 CFI point change. The fact that this participant started with a CFI of 290 meant that the change reflected a 33percent reduction in fear. In the remaining CFI results we experienced two 25 percent reductions, a 23 percent reduction, two 14 percent reductions, and a 3 percent reduction. We also experienced two increases in reported fear: one 8 percent and the other 7 percent.

The analysis of the individual statements such as “I can’t get ahead in this world and help others get ahead too” allow for specific analysis about what, in particular, can be seen as change in the group. As demonstrated in the table (the graphic illustration of change in the whole group), the statements showed a wide variety of changes experienced. We categorized the changes in these statements: If a statement resulted in fear reduction greater than 25 percent from the initial survey to the concluding survey, it is considered a high level of reduction. A statement that resulted in a 20 percent-25 percent change is considered moderate reduction. A 15 percent-20 percent reduction is considered a mild level of reduction. Less than 15 percent is a minor change.

High levels of reduced fear were experienced in four statements or 50 percent of the category called Fear of Compassion for Others. The first category, “people will take advantage of me if they see me as too compassionate,” experienced a 39 percent reduction. “Because some people cannot be forgiven, they should not be helped” reduced by 32 percent. And two statements reduced by 26 percent: “If I extend kindness often, I will be at a disadvantage” and “If I try to advance the benefits of the community at large, my people will get even less.” Fear of

Compassion from Others (category #2) had one statement with a high level of reduced fear. The fear for “when I notice that I am receiving compassion from others. I often become anxious and pick up my pace in everything I am doing” was reduced by 33 percent. For all the statements with a high level of change, statement responses moved from a range of ‘sometimes agreeing’ to ‘disagreeing’ (as an average response), which is a drop from a middle response to the response that indicates the lowest amount of fear.

There were three statements that had an average original aggregate CFI that fell in the ‘agreeing’ range for the original questionnaire. The highest level of agreement was the statement “I often feel like my failures are the result of my inadequacies.” This statement experienced a 20 percent reduction in fear and fell from the agreeing range to the sometimes range. In the final questionnaire, this question was no longer the highest level of agreement. Equally burdensome an obstacle was the statement, “When others are moved to help me, I often feel undeserving.” This statement reflected 17 percent reduced fear, which is only a mild result. In the end, this statement was the new highest fear statement. Even so, the reduction reflected allows this statement to also move from the ‘agreement’ range to the ‘sometimes’ range of average CFI. The last statement that showed agreement on average in the results of the original questionnaire was “I often wonder if a display of warmth and kindness from others is genuine.” This statement reflected a 25 percent reduction in CFI which took it from the ‘agree’ range to the lowest end of the “sometimes” range.

In a broader look at the statements we can see distinct trends: 13 of the 24 questions experienced changes in CFI greater than 15 percent. Of the 11 remaining, 6 statements had a starting CFI that was in the disagree range on average and represented a minor obstacle to compassion. All of the statements that had an original CFI in the agreeing range (major obstacles

to compassion) reflected significant change. Four statements that had an original CFI in the sometimes range remained in the sometimes range without significant change. Finally, the average ending CFI for all statements in the category Fear of Compassion for Others reflect CFIs in the disagreeing range.

### **Whole Sample Discussion**

The use of previously tested resources was extremely valuable in this process. This research methodology is dependent upon a researcher's ability to make effective use of the practices developed in advance by scholars in the field. The effective use of Mutual Invitation and the Compassion Practice were both developed through several months of small group studies in which people independently came together for purposes of spiritual exploration. These exploration sessions, though not a part of the current study, would develop a deep and working understanding of the practices that would later be used in the study. No data was collected or analyzed in these sessions, yet facility in explanation for and use of specific skills were established. Furthermore, potential pitfalls in the small group sessions were discovered: For instance, the researcher learned that anxiety can occur in the Mutual Invitation Process because people who are used to being able to express ready answers at will may feel uncomfortably restrained. Another example was the discovery in the Compassion Practice that, even in an introductory course, there is a tendency for some practitioners to fixate on a difficult other that is responsible for significant personal injury. This tendency should be avoided in the work of beginners. A practitioner that is engaging in the Compassion Practice as an introduction should be cautioned. Practicing transformation of emotional injuries should be begun by focusing on minor emotional interior movements. This way, practitioners can develop skills upon which greater capacities can be built. Therefore, it must be understood that duplicating the MCCP

would require significant investment in the time to develop skills that are useful in the research methodology.

### **Qualified Sample Analysis**

The qualified sample that completed the MCCP is the subset of the whole sample that we believe had relatively unblocked access to the practices that facilitate the MCCP. Analyzing this subset allows a perspective of the change that is possible in a group of receptive participants. The MCCP had eight participants that experienced a significant reduction in the Compassion Fear Index (CFI). The aggregate Individual CFI had a range from 120 to 600 and the individual analysis remains the same as that we discussed for the whole group.

This view of the results is looking at the qualified group (Q group) as a whole. The range for the CFI of the group of 8 participants is 960 to 4800. This analysis will be consistent with that of the whole group in that the questionnaire was offered with 24 questions in three categories—eight questions per category. Each question was answered with a mark in one of five levels of agreement. These levels were assigned to statements of fear that would be obstacles to compassion such as "when others are moved to help me, I feel undeserving." The response choices were strongly disagreeing, disagree, sometimes, agree, and strongly agree. If the average response to questions was strongly disagree, the group CFI would be 960. When the average response was disagreeing the group CFI would be 1920. The original group CFI is 2270. This number indicates that the group was, on average, leaning toward sometimes agreeing. The final questionnaire had a group CFI of 1730. The net change was 540 or 24 percent decrease (compared to 17 percent in the whole group) in reported fears as an obstacle to compassion. The group reduced fear to the point that the average response was on the low end of the disagreeing with the statements range of fear.



When the Q group is studied, the categories of fear showed a significant and different story to tell the whole group. The categories are Fear of Compassion for Others, Fear of Compassion from Others, and Fear of Compassion for Self. The original questionnaire demonstrated that Fear of Compassion for Others had the lowest starting CFI of 640. The final results showed that this category was also a category of greatly decreased fear. After the final questionnaire, this category dropped 155 CFI points or 24 percent (compared to 21 percent in the whole group). The category with the highest CFI as a group was also the category of greatest change in the Q group. It is Fear of Compassion from Others with an opening CFI of 850. This category had an outstanding reduction in fear in the end—215 CFI points or 25 percent (compared to 16 percent in the whole group). The category of Fear of Compassion for Self began with a CFI of 780 and reduced by 170 CFI points or 22 percent (compared to 15 percent in the whole group).

The individual questionnaire results were discussed above. There is no change as a result of isolating the Q group. However, there is a significant difference with the Q group when studying statements. The analysis of the individual statements allow for measurable results about what specifically can be seen as change in the Q group. As demonstrated on the table (the graphic illustration of change in the Q group), the statements indicated a wide variety of changes experienced. I categorized the change in these statements in the same ranges as the whole group analysis. A statement which shows fear reduction greater than 25 percent is considered a high level of reduction. A statement that experienced a 20 percent -25 percent change is considered moderate reduction. A 15 percent -20 percent reduction is considered a mild level of reduction. Less than 15 percent is a minor change.

High levels of reduced fear were experienced in eight statements or 33 percent of the entire survey. This includes three of the eight statements in the category Fear of Compassion for Others as well as three in Fear of Compassion from Others (category #2). Finally, two statements in the Fear of Compassion for Self category experienced a high level of change. In the first category, “people will take advantage of me if they see me as too compassionate” experienced a 45 percent reduction. “Because some people cannot be forgiven, they should not be helped” reduced by 31 percent. And the statement “If I try to advance the benefits to people in the community at large, my people will get even less” reduced by 29 percent.

The high level of reduction statements in the category of Fear of Compassion from Others are as follows: “When I notice that I am receiving compassion from others. I often become anxious and pick up my pace in everything I am doing” reduced by 48 percent (compared to 33 percent in the whole group). Also, two statements experienced a 26 percent reduction in this category: “I often wonder if displays of warmth and kindness from others are genuine” and “When someone starts to act and feel on my behalf, I often decline to accept help.”

In the category Fear of Compassion for Self, there are two statements with a high level of change. A 35 percent reduction in fear is the result in the statement, “If I am suffering, it is often because I deserve it.” In all the statements with a high level of change, statements moved from a range of sometimes agreeing to disagreeing as an average response. The statement, “I feel that I don’t deserve to be kind and forgiving to myself” registered a reduction of 30 percent.

The Moderate change category in the Q group is equally dramatic with eight statements that reflect a reduction of fear between 20 percent and 25 percent (compared to only 5 statements in the whole group). Also, the Q group has moderate change spread evenly through all three

categories while the whole group mostly has moderate change in the single category Fear of Compassion for Self.

The Category Fear of Compassion for Self still has the most moderate change with three questions: 24 percent change is registered for two of the statements, “I often see myself as unusually insufficient” and “I often feel like my failures are the result of my inadequacies.” The statement, “there is rarely any benefit from seeing myself with caring and kind intentions” has a reduction in agreement of 21 percent.

The second highest rate of moderate change is found in the category Fear of Compassion from Others with three questions registering: There is a 25 percent reduction in agreement with the statement, “If I’m being helped, I often wonder what is wrong with me.” 22 percent and 21 percent reduction in agreement are registered for the statements, “after someone goes out of their way to help me, I feel helpless,” and “when I am consistently the object of someone else’s kindness, I often feel like my day is unusually burdensome” respectively.

Finally, the Category Fear of Compassion for Others registers the last two statements in the range of moderate change. There was a 25 percent reduction in agreement with the statement, “if I extend kindness often, I will be at a disadvantage.” Agreement is reduced by 21 percent in the statement “if I am a source of help to others, my family members have less advantages.”

Lastly, there was a mild change 15 percent -20 percent is the smallest with only 3 statements, 1 in each category fitting the range. 18 percent reduction in agreement is registered in the Q group to the statement, “I withhold compassion from people because they deserve judgment.” Finally, a 15 percent reduction in agreement is found in two other statements, one in each of the other two categories. These statements are “when others are moved to help me, I feel

undeserving” and “it doesn’t usually make sense to be moved to compassion by my own difficulties.”

In a broader look at the statements we can see distinct trends. The Q group has 20 of the 24 statements registering greater than 15 percent change (compared to 13 of the 24 statements in the whole group). Furthermore, all four of the remaining had a starting CFI that was in the disagree range on average and represented a minor obstacle to compassion. All of the statements that had an original CFI in the agreeing range (major obstacles to compassion) and in the sometimes range (moderate obstacles to compassion) reflected significant change. Finally, the average ending CFI for all statements in the Q group except 3 have a reduction in agreement that puts them in the disagree range. There are only three questions that have an ending CFI that fits the sometimes range (moderate obstacle) after the ending survey in the Q group. Two statements barely register in the sometimes range, “it doesn’t usually make sense to be moved to compassion by my own difficulties” and “I often feel like my failures are the result of my inadequacies.” The only statement that remains firmly in the sometimes range for the ending questionnaire in the Q group is “when others are moved to help me, I often feel undeserving.”

### **Qualified Sample Discussion**

The Q group, as a whole, are eight people that have an exceptional reduction of agreement to the statements of fear that are obstacles to compassion. The beginning questionnaires for the Q group has twelve statements that register as sometimes (obstacle to compassion) and two that register as agree (major obstacles to compassion). In the final questionnaire there is only 1 statement that remains firmly as an obstacle. For these eight individuals, all but one of the statements were reduced to minor obstacles or less. This is meaningfully compared to the significantly positive results of the whole group where nine of

twenty-four statements in the ending survey remain in the sometimes range (obstacles to compassion). The whole group started with three in the agree range (major obstacles) and fifteen in the sometimes range (obstacles). The Q group had a very similar beginning survey of three and thirteen respectively.

### **Final Discussion**

I believe that the reduction in agreement with the statements that describe fears as obstacles to compassion are significant in the group that participated in this study as a whole. The processes used in this study can therefore make a meaningful difference in the effort to cultivate compassion in a group of diverse ethnicities and religious perspectives even when parts of the group are less than fully capable of accessing the systems being used. When the whole group experiences a lowering of the range of barriers to compassion from three major obstacles and fifteen obstacles (75 percent of the statements serving as obstacles or major obstacles) to zero major obstacles and nine obstacles (35 percent of statements represent obstacles), it is clear that the barriers to compassion are greatly lessened.

When we observe the results of the qualified group, the results are exceptional. The Q group starts with barriers to compassion that have almost the identical footprint as the whole group—three major obstacles and eleven obstacles (58 percent of the statements represent either obstacles or major obstacles). The end result for the Q group is that only 2 percent of the statements clearly register as obstacles with no major obstacles. If we are willing to hold the two slightly elevated statements, we would assert that as many as 12 percent of the statements register as obstacles in the end. The eight members of the Q group are evidence that the processes used in the Merced Compassion Cultivation Project have demonstrated a significant

impact on the ability to cultivate compassion in a community of diverse ethnicities and religious practices.

## **6: Guiding Statements**

### **Finding Compassion in the Mission**

When the mission for which we are sent to any given community as religious leaders (i.e. to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world, to honor the tree of life, to proclaim love for all and hate for none, to testify that God is still speaking, etc.) is at stake, it is important to find work within the mission that is also experienced by the community as relevant, addressing an unmet need, or even an answer to prayer. Doing so in a way that has an impact on the broader population of the community is even better. Creating pathways to a greater openness to one another, to civil discourse that would be otherwise absent, to revealing the essential humanity among neighbors, and to the potential for cultivating compassion, is a way to approach a community with an essential good. However, it is not enough to have an essential good to offer. We also need a platform from which that could be transacted.

Truly reaching a community may very well be about transcending the borders, barriers, and walls that divide people, including the people of faith. We should not mistake the mission field to be as simple as the building in which our faith communities reside. If we are limited in our impact to people that would come to a place of worship at the designated hour, on a specific day set aside for worship, through a very specific context, we greatly reduce our potential for impacting the community in a meaningful way. Even as the populations of the towns to which we are sent are growing, the people attending meetings of communities of faith are shrinking. Yet, when the ways that our communities reveal their brokenness is made evident, proposals that would offer healing and hope need to reach populations on many levels.

## **Possible Outcomes**

The Merced Compassion Cultivation Project demonstrates a model that offers elements that many communities would consider valuable in the search for essential good. It offers a pathway to intentional openness. It offers an egalitarian communication system that breaks down socially constructed access to voice. The use of Mutual Invitation is a process that can encourage those who always feel the liberty and urge to speak to intentionally take a listening posture. At the same time, those who are used to less opportunities to have voice in any discussion are brought to the conversation with predictable regularity. It is possible to glean the good in the inclusion of a greater pool of perspectives.

The MCCP also models actively seeking the participation of people that are not normally all part of the same faith community. Being united in a particular practice is not bad in and of itself. Yet, the more we have in common ideologically, the more myopic our discussion becomes. What the MCCP offers through a process that calls together diverse voices is both unpredictable revelation, surprising commonalities, appreciation of differences, the ability to relate to people, traditions, and ideas that would otherwise be left inaccessible without intention.

By incorporating the Compassion Practice, the MCCP models the use of stories, lessons, and a system of meditation that is structured specifically for intervening with the obstacle to compassion. This practice is designed to help individuals relive their own personal relationship with the sacred as they understand it. Then this process allows the practitioner to find and extend healing intention to the brokenness that they find in themselves and in others. The work that is done in this practice has great potential for spiritual renewal.

Adding these factors to the time used for sharing the experience with one another, the MCCP models the demonstration of diverse experiences and diverse understandings throughout



the time that the group spends together. Without a time for sharing, we may consider our own thoughts to be universally correct or universally in error. We may believe our own experiences to be the only testimony to truth. Broadening the experience by sharing allows a participant to have a more balanced and realistic view of their own experience as one of the many possible experiences that are happening in any given moment.

### **Possible Applications**

One possibility would be valuable to use the model provided at an individual place of worship. One could experience the diversity of experience within a single faith community. It could be used in small groups or to integrate new members with established members. The revealing of experiences and the intended purpose of working on the obstacles to compassion would be a potential spiritual growth opportunity.

I would also suggest that the MCCP models a way for a church to turn members toward the community at large. There could be duplicates of the MCCP practiced between a small amount of one particular faith community that is intentionally seeking to understand and communicate with members of groups that live in the community but would be unlikely to join in a church function that was nothing more than an indoctrination course. This would be a way for members of a faith community to be known by the community. Conversely, it would be a potential open door to better knowing the community at large.

Due to the fact that the inspiration for this project came from the unfortunate experience of a freshman struggling to integrate in a university experience, I suggest that this process can be used in non-religious environments as well. Many colleges are creating mandatory first semester courses that are intended to help freshman open themselves up to the greater diversity of thought and culture that exists many college and university campuses. The MCCP model could be a first

semester course that brings awareness to the varieties of thought and experience that exist in the student body. Moreover, the results indicate that reduction in the fear that obstruct these young minds from compassion for one another is a possible outcome.

### **Meeting the Responsibility of Religious Leadership**

When we listen to the news of our time or even the speeches of our elected leaders, more often than not we are hearing words and seeing images that tear at the fabric of our communities. The news is motivated by attracting viewership. The elected official feels a need to promote an ideology that electrifies a base of voters at any given time. We are seeing the promotion of ideology and the advancing of wedge issues as a regular feature in our daily consumption of input. We are told of the pressing issues that are interminably “breaking news” that demands our immediate and full attention. Then we are offered stories that are filled with buzzwords and sensationalized to meet the hype that inspired our attention in the first place.

What is worse is the effect of social media. It has become a normalized practice to be followed or be friends with people that agree with us and unfriend or unfollow the dissidents. We are amused by our ability to insult the faceless electronic presence of a person that would otherwise have little connection to our lives. And far too often thoughts that are not organically developed from experience or properly researched are rebroadcast as our own representation of self. This is unfamiliar territory and the effect of losing the ability to have and enjoy constructive civil discourse with people who have arrived at conclusions that challenge our own through legitimate life lessons is looming in the background.

Religious leaders have the ability to preserve the notion that human dignity is universal and enrich the communities that we serve with tools to overcome the forces that tear at the fabric of our communities. Facilitating experiences that bring many voices, cultures, and religious

perspectives to an intentional shared practice that has the goal of cultivating compassion is truly meeting a need that has spiritual overtones and potentials for sacred moments. Communities need to dependably find people that have this sort of motivation among religious leaders in order to realize the benefits that religion has to offer regarding the cultivation of compassion.

## **Summary**

Though the outcomes of the MCCP reveal positive results for the time and place in which the project was developed, the MCCP is a project with a small sample size that has been conducted in just one specific community. The fact that many communities are growing in diversity and experiencing similar problems and need does not create direct correlation and predictable transferable outcomes in any attempt to extrapolate the outcomes to the larger world community. Instead this is a qualitative study that has focused on the experiences of a specific small group. These experiences do suggest that an essential good is possible to achieve in diverse community. More specifically, the essential good that is possible includes a reduction of the fear that obstructs compassion and the improved opportunity for cultivating compassion in an ethnically and religiously diverse group.

When given the opportunity to effect change in a community, such as living out a pastoral call after being appointed to a place unknown, employing those tactics modeled in the MCCP would be attempting a project that has garnered positive results in the past. There are no guarantees and still it is helpful to have the data that shows us a possibility in our effort to doing all the good we can.

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## **Appendix A**

### **Participant Release Form**

Approved by Faculty Advisor Jack Jackson, D.Min., Ph.D., on March 30, 2017.

Administered in person prior to and at the conclusion of Merced Compassion Cultivation Project meditation sessions from 16 May through July 19, 2017.

#### **Claremont School of Theology Letter of Informed Consent for Participants Able to Give Legal Consent**

#### **Consent to Participate in Research**

**Rev. George Edd-Bennett MDiv. conducting a study of Compassion Cultivation in Merced, CA**

You are invited to participate in a research study, entitled “**Merced Compassion Cultivation Project.**”

The study is being conducted by **Rev. George Edd-Bennett M.Div.** under the supervision of **Dr. Karen Dalton D.Min.** of Claremont School of Theology, 1325 N. College Ave; Claremont, CA 91711, [kdalton@cst.edu](mailto:kdalton@cst.edu) p (909)447-2534

The purpose of this research study is to examine use the Compassion Practice developed by Dr. Frank Rogers to demonstrate that adults with diverse religious backgrounds do cultivate compassion for one another when they intentionally engage each other in a short series of group contemplation and

reflection sessions, even when cultural barriers to compassion exist. Your participation in the study will contribute to a better understanding of cultivating compassion in Religiously diverse communities You are free to contact the investigator using the information below to discuss the study.

899 Yosemite Parkway Merced, Ca 95340 p,(775)343-8695 [george@umcmerced.org](mailto:george@umcmerced.org)

You must be at least 18 years old to participate.

If you agree to participate:

- The interviews and group contemplation exercises will consist of approximately an 8 to 10-week commitment - including two 40 minute interviews and five 80 minute group sessions which will be spread of these weeks. This study is intended to measure how compassion may be cultivated in a multi religious community.
- Your participation will consist in being interviewed, joining a group for contemplation exercises, sharing your experience of the exercise in the group and reflecting on the experience with the investigator. You will not be compensated.

*The purpose of this study is to gain insight into practical theology, pastoral care and/or spiritual care.*

*Participation in this study should not be regarded as—or substituted for—therapy by a licensed professional.*

#### **Risks/Benefits/Confidentiality of Data**



There are **some possible risks or discomfort which could cause you to feel uncomfortable, embarrassed, sad, tired, etc.**; there will be no costs for participating. Your name, email address and other personally identifiable information will be kept during the data collection phase. No personally identifiable information will be publicly released. Your personal information, if collected, will be used solely for tracking purposes. A limited number of research team members will have access to the data during data collection. Those research team members are: Rev. George Edd-Bennett MDiv.

When the results of the research are published or discussed in conferences, no information will be included that would reveal your identity. If photographs, videos, or audio-tape recordings of your participation are used for educational purposes, your identity will be protected or disguised. Your information will be stored Dec 1<sup>st</sup>, 2018 and then destroyed.

### **Participation or Withdrawal**

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You may decline to answer any question and you have the right to withdraw from participation at any time. Withdrawal will not affect your relationship with Claremont School of Theology in any way. If you do not want to participate, you may simply stop participating.

### **Contacts**

If you have any questions about the study or need to update your email address contact the primary investigator Rev. George Edd-Bennett MDiv at (775)343-8695 or send an email to [George@umcmerced.org](mailto:George@umcmerced.org). This study has been reviewed by Claremont School of Theology Institutional Review Board and the study is exempt from IRB approval due to minimal risk to participants.

**Questions about your rights as a research participant.**

If you have questions about your rights or are dissatisfied at any time with any part of this study, you can contact, anonymously if you wish, the chair of the Institutional Review Board by phone at (909) 447-6344 or email at [irb@cst.edu](mailto:irb@cst.edu).

Thank you.

**❖ SIGNATURE OF PARENT OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANT**

*I have read the information provided above. I have been given an opportunity to ask questions and all of my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I have been given a copy of this form.*

---

*Name of Participant*

---

*Signature of Participant*

*Date*

---

*Address*

---

---

*Phone*

*Email*

***SIGNATURE OF WITNESS***

*My signature as witness certifies that the participant signed this consent form in my presence as his/her voluntary act and deed.*

---

*Name of Witness*

---

*Signature of Witness*

*Date (same as participant's)*

***SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR***

---

*Signature of Investigator*

*Date (same as participant's)*

**A copy of this document will be supplied for your record**

## **Appendix B**

### **Compassion Fear Index Survey Questions**

**All of the statements below are to be rated for personal agreement by choosing one**

**Strongly Disagree // Disagree // Sometimes // Agree // Strongly agree //**

#### **Part One. Compassion for Others**

- #1. People will take advantage of me if they see me as too compassionate.
- #2. If I extend Kindness often, I will be at a disadvantage.
- #3. If I try to advance the benefits of people in the community at large, MY people will get even less
- #4. When I am a source of help to others, my family members have less advantages
- #5. I can't get ahead in this world and help others get ahead too.
- #6. I withhold compassion from others because they deserve punishment.
- #7. Because some people cannot be forgiven, they should not be helped.
- #8. Serving a life sentence in jail disqualifies a person from acts of kindness from me.

#### **Part Two. Compassion from Others**

- #9. I often wonder if displays of warmth and kindness from others is genuine.
- #10. When others are moved to help me, I feel undeserving.

#11. When others consistently express kindness to me, I often try to avoid them.

#12. After someone has gone out of their way to help me, I often feel helpless.

#13 If I am being helped, I often wonder what is wrong with me.

#14 When I notice that I am receiving kindness from others, I often become anxious and pick up the pace on everything I am doing.

#15. When someone starts to act and feel on my behalf, I often decline to accept the help.

#16. When I am consistently the object of someone's kindness, I often feel like my day is unusually burdensome.

### **Part Three. Compassion for Self**

#17. I feel like I don't deserve to be kind and forgiving to myself

#18. My own suffering is undeserving of my love and concern.

#19. There is rarely any benefit from seeing myself with caring and kind intentions.

#20 If I am suffering it is often because I deserve it.

#21 I often feel like my failures are the result of my inadequacies.

#22 I often see myself as unusually insufficient.

#23 I often feel like, because of me, my own suffering is worse than the suffering of others.

#24 It doesn't usually make sense to be moved to compassion by my own difficulties.

## **Appendix C**

### **Social Location Questions**

Do you identify with a faith community?

If so, what community?

How would you describe your practice of religion?

What is your age, gender and language of preference?

How do you describe your ethnic background?

How are you connected to the community of Merced?

Length of time in this community.

Have you had any experience with meditation? If so, to what extent?

Appendix D

Compassion Fear Index (CFI) Questionnaire

Merced Community Cultivation Project

Rev. G. George Edd-Bennett  
6/27/17

Questions

Compassion For Others

People will take advantage of me if they see me as too compassionate.

If I extend kindness often, I will be at a disadvantage.

If I try to advance the benefits of people in the community at large, my people will get even less

When I am a source of help to others, my family members have less advantages

I can't get ahead in this world and help others get ahead too

I withhold compassion from people because they deserve punishment

Because some people cannot be forgiven, they should not be helped.

Serving a life sentence in jail disqualifies a person from acts of kindness from me

Compassion From Others

I often wonder if displays of warmth and kindness from others is genuine

When others are moved to help me, I often feel undeserving

When others consistently express kindness to me, I often try to avoid them.

After someone has gone out of their way to help me, I often feel helpless

If I am being helped, I often wonder what is wrong with me.

When I notice that I am receiving kindness from others, I often become anxious and pick up my pace in everything I'm doing.

When someone start to act and feel on my behalf, I often decline to accept the help

When I am consistently the object of someone else's kindness, I often feel like my day is unusually burdensome.

Compassion For Self

I feel that I don't deserve to be kind and forgiving to myself

My own suffering is underserving of my loving concern.

There is rarely any benefit from seeing myself with caring and kind intentions

If I am suffering it is often because I deserve it.

Strongly Disagree

Disagree

Sometimes

Agree

Strongly Agree

Total

Questions	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Sometimes	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
I often feel like . . . attitudes are the result of my inadequacies.						
I often see myself as unusually insufficient.						
I often feel like, because of me, my own suffering is worse than the suffering of others.						
It doesn't usually make sense to be moved to compassion by my own difficulties.						



# Appendix E

## Data Tables

Figure #1 - Original Questionnaire Result for the Whole Group

Participant by Number	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	11	12	13	14	Question Total
1	15	15	15	15	5	15	15	0	20	10	15	15	155
2	10	10	10	5	5	10	15	0	20	10	15	5	115
3	15	10	10	5	5	10	20	0	10	10	10	5	115
4	10	10	10	5	5	10	20	0	10	10	10	5	105
5	10	5	5	5	5	10	15	0	5	10	10	5	85
6	15	10	5	15	5	10	5	0	15	10	10	5	105
7	15	5	10	15	5	10	10	0	10	10	15	5	110
8	15	10	5	10	5	10	15	0	10	10	10	5	105
Fear of Compassion for others													
	105	75	70	75	40	85	110	0	110	80	95	50	895
9	20	15	10	10	10	15	20	0	20	15	15	10	160
10	15	15	20	10	20	15	20	0	15	20	15	10	175
11	15	10	5	5	15	10	15	0	10	10	10	5	110
12	15	10	15	10	10	15	10	0	5	10	10	5	115
13	10	15	15	10	20	10	5	0	10	10	10	5	120
14	15	15	25	10	25	15	10	0	10	10	10	5	150
15	15	20	20	15	10	15	15	0	10	10	15	10	155
16	15	10	10	10	15	15	10	0	10	10	10	10	125
Fear of Compassion from others													
	120	110	120	80	125	110	105	0	90	95	95	60	1110
17	10	10	15	10	15	20	15	0	10	10	10	5	130
18	10	5	10	10	10	15	5	0	10	10	10	10	105
19	10	5	15	10	25	15	5	0	5	10	10	5	115
20	10	10	15	10	15	15	15	0	15	10	10	15	140
21	15	15	15	10	25	20	20	0	15	10	10	20	175
22	10	10	10	10	25	20	10	0	10	10	15	15	145
23	10	10	5	10	10	10	15	0	10	10	5	5	100
24	15	10	15	10	15	15	5	0	10	10	10	5	120
Fear of Compassion for self													
	90	75	100	80	140	130	90	0	85	80	80	80	1030
Survey individual total													
	315	260	290	235	305	325	305	0	285	255	270	190	3035
Median CFI													285
Average													276

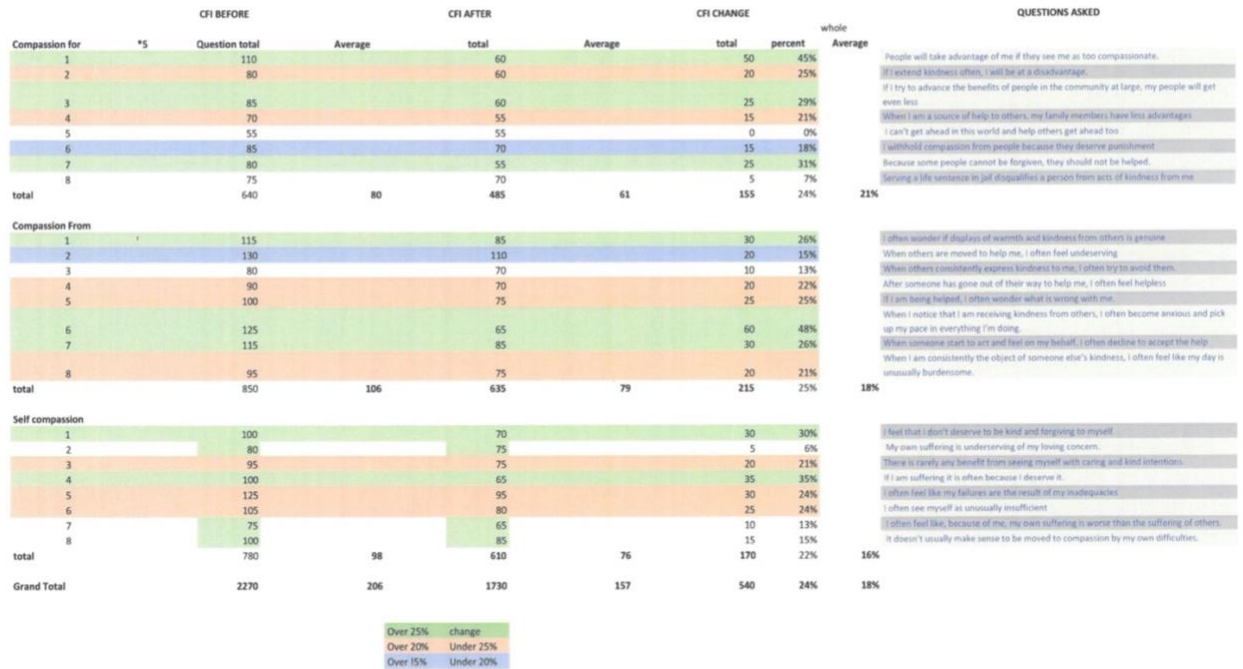
Figure #2 - Final Questionnaire Result for the Whole Group

Participant by Number	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	11	12	13	14	Question Total
1	10	10	10	5	5	5	15	0	5	10	15	5	95
2	10	10	10	5	5	5	10	0	15	5	10	5	85
3	15	5	5	5	5	5	10	0	15	5	10	5	85
4	15	5	5	5	5	10	15	0	5	5	10	15	95
5	10	10	10	5	5	5	15	0	5	5	10	5	85
6	15	10	10	5	5	10	5	0	10	5	15	5	85
7	10	5	10	5	5	5	5	0	10	5	10	5	75
8	15	5	10	10	5	10	5	0	10	5	15	5	95
Fear of Compassion for others													
9	100	60	65	45	40	55	80	0	75	45	95	50	710
10	15	10	5	10	10	15	15	0	10	10	10	10	120
11	10	10	15	5	15	15	15	0	20	20	10	10	145
12	10	5	5	5	10	10	10	0	10	15	15	5	100
13	10	5	10	5	10	10	10	0	10	10	10	15	110
14	10	5	10	5	15	10	15	0	10	10	10	5	105
15	15	10	5	5	10	10	10	0	5	20	15	15	100
16	10	5	10	5	10	10	20	0	15	10	15	10	135
Fear of Compassion from others													
17	90	55	70	45	90	90	125	0	90	105	105	70	935
18	10	10	5	5	10	15	10	0	10	5	10	10	100
19	10	10	10	5	10	15	5	0	10	5	10	15	105
20	10	10	5	5	15	15	5	0	10	5	10	5	95
21	10	10	10	5	15	15	15	0	15	5	15	15	110
22	10	10	10	10	15	20	15	0	10	5	10	20	140
23	10	10	10	5	15	15	15	0	10	5	10	10	115
24	10	15	10	5	15	15	5	0	10	5	15	5	100
Fear of Compassion for self													
Survey individual total	80	85	60	50	100	115	90	0	80	40	90	85	875
Median CF	270	280	195	140	230	260	295	0	245	190	290	205	2520
Average													

**Figure #3 - Variance Calculated for the Whole Group**

[illegible]

**Figure #4 - Graphic Representation of Change for the Whole Group**



**Figure #5 - Original Questionnaire Result for the Qualified Group**

Participant by Number	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	11	12	13	14	Question Total
1	15	15	15	15	5	15		0	20	10			110
2	10	10	10	5	5	10		0	20	10			80
3	15	10	10	5	5	10		0	20	10			85
4	10	10	10	5	5	10		0	10	10			70
5	10	5	5	5	5	10		0	5	10			55
6	15	10	5	15	5	10		0	15	10			85
7	15	5	10	15	5	10		0	10	10			80
8	15	10	5	10	5	10		0	10	10			75
Fear of Compassion for others													
9	105	75	70	75	40	85		0	110	80			640
10	20	15	10	10	10	15		0	20	15			115
11	15	15	20	10	20	15		0	15	20			130
12	15	10	5	5	15	10		0	10	10			80
13	10	15	15	10	10	15		0	5	10			90
14	10	15	15	10	20	10		0	10	10			100
15	15	15	25	10	25	15		0	10	10			125
16	15	20	20	15	10	15		0	10	10			115
Fear of Compassion from others													
17	120	110	120	80	125	110		0	90	95			850
18	10	10	15	10	15	20		0	10	10			100
19	10	5	10	10	25	15		0	10	10			80
20	10	10	15	10	15	15		0	5	10			95
21	15	10	15	10	15	20		0	15	10			100
22	10	10	10	10	25	20		0	10	10			125
23	10	10	5	10	20	10		0	10	10			105
24	15	10	15	10	15	15		0	10	10			75
Fear of Compassion for self													
Survey individual total	90	75	100	80	140	130		0	85	80			780
Median CRT	285												
Average	206												2270

Figure #6 - Final Questionnaire Result for the Qualified Group

Participant by Number	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	11	12	13	14	Question Total
1	10	10	10	5	5	5		0	5	10			60
2	10	10	5	5	5	5		0	15	5			60
3	15	5	5	5	5	5		0	5	5			60
4	10	10	10	5	5	10		0	5	5			55
5	15	10	10	5	5	5		0	10	5			55
6	15	10	10	5	5	10		0	10	5			70
7	10	5	10	5	5	5		0	10	5			55
8	15	5	10	10	5	10		0	10	5			70
Fear of Compassion for others													
9	100	60	65	45	40	55		0	75	45			485
10	15	10	5	10	10	15		0	10	10			85
11	10	10	15	5	15	15		0	20	20			110
12	10	5	5	5	10	10		0	10	15			70
13	10	5	10	5	15	10		0	10	10			70
14	10	5	5	5	10	10		0	10	10			75
15	15	5	5	5	10	10		0	5	20			65
16	10	5	10	5	10	10		0	15	10			85
Fear of Compassion from others													
17	90	55	70	45	90	90		0	90	105			635
18	10	10	5	5	10	15		0	10	5			70
19	10	10	10	5	10	15		0	10	5			75
20	10	10	5	5	15	15		0	10	5			75
21	10	10	5	5	10	15		0	5	5			65
22	10	10	10	10	15	20		0	15	5			95
23	10	10	10	5	15	15		0	10	5			80
24	10	15	10	5	10	15		0	10	5			65
Fear of Compassion for self													
Survey individual total	270	200	195	140	230	260		0	80	40			1730
Median CFI	230												
Average	157												

**Figure #7 - Variance Calculated for the Qualified Group**

Participant by Number														Question Total														Delta	
														1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	11	12	13	14				
Fear of Compassion for others														1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	11	12	13	14	50	45%		
														5	5	5	5	10	0	10	5	5	5	5	5	20	25%		
														0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	5	5	5	5	25	29%		
														0	5	5	5	0	0	0	5	5	5	5	5	15	21%		
														-5	-5	5	5	0	0	0	0	0	5	5	5	0	0%		
														0	-5	0	-5	0	0	0	0	0	5	5	5	15	18%		
														0	0	0	-5	10	0	0	0	5	5	5	5	25	31%		
														0	0	0	0	10	0	0	5	0	5	5	5	5	7%		
														5	5	-5	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	5	5	5			
Fear of Compassion for others														5	15	5	5	30	0	30	35	35	35	35	35	155	24%		
														5	5	5	5	0	0	0	0	10	5	5	5	30	26%		
														5	5	5	5	0	0	0	0	-5	0	0	0	20	15%		
														5	5	5	5	0	5	0	0	0	-5	0	0	10	13%		
														5	5	5	5	5	0	5	0	-5	0	0	0	20	22%		
														0	10	5	5	5	0	0	0	0	25	25%	0	60	48%		
														5	10	20	20	5	15	5	5	0	48	48%	5	30	26%		
														0	10	10	10	5	5	5	0	5	-10	0	0	30	21%		
														5	5	0	5	5	5	5	-5	-5	0	0	0	20	21%		
Fear of Compassion from others														30	55	10	35	35	20	20	0	0	-10	215	25%				
														0	0	10	5	5	5	5	0	0	5	5	5	30	30%		
														0	-5	5	5	0	0	0	0	0	5	5	5	5	6%		
														0	-5	10	5	5	10	0	-5	-5	5	5	5	20	21%		
														0	0	10	5	5	5	0	0	0	35	35%	5	30	24%		
														5	5	5	5	0	10	0	0	0	0	5	5	30	24%		
														0	0	0	0	5	10	5	0	0	5	5	5	25	24%		
														0	0	0	0	0	0	5	0	0	5	5	5	10	13%		
														5	-5	5	5	5	0	0	0	0	5	5	5	15	15%		
Fear of Compassion for self														10	-10	40	30	40	15	5	40	5	40	40	40	170	22%		
Survey individual total														45	60	95	95	75	65	40	65	40	65	65	65	540	24%		
% Delta														17%	21%	40%	31%	23%	21%	16%	24%	16%	24%	16%	24%	540	24%		
Delta Total																													
Median CFI														60															
Average														0															
														22%															
														26%															

**Figure #8 - Graphic Representation of Change for the Qualified Group**

